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ISSUE 196 AUGUST 2008

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## A SHADE OF JADE

**J**UST WHEN I thought that the grey cloud of responsibility had exhausted me of girlish excitement forever, Ubisoft release a trailer for *Beyond Good & Evil* 2. And not only is it absolutely gorgeous, but it's the most confident teaser I've ever seen. For a game that didn't sell a sausage, yet captured critical and cult hearts alike, to reappear on the scene with a pig snorting flies and the lead character deliberately hiding her beautiful green-lips beneath a parasol – well if that's not a sign of Michel Ancel saying "I'm making the game I want to make, if you don't like it you can swivel" (only in French) then I don't know what is.

Games like the original *Beyond Good & Evil* (still available on budget at a reasonable price of £4.99) are proof positive that gaming needs more auteurs like Ancel who, much like big names in Hollywood, makes a ton of cash for Ubisoft with commercial projects and is then rewarded with the ability to set his Montpellier team loose on more creative endeavours.

The trick is, of course, to make sure that these endeavours actually sell – something that *Beyond Good & Evil* (still available on budget at a reasonable price of £4.99) certainly failed to do. Ubisoft suits have indicated that a more 'casual' direction may be taken, which injects a certain modicum of trepidation, but the sheer fact the game exists is enough to keep me happy for now.

In other news, it's a good issue this month. I hope you enjoy it.

*Will Porter*

Will Porter editor

wporter@futurenet.co.uk

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See page 104

# 50 COVER STORY

# CRYYSIS WARHEAD

More explosions, more action, more performance – Crytek take us back to paradise...

## 58 AGE OF CONAN: HYBORIAN ADVENTURES

Bloody, violent, sexy – the definitive verdict on the year's biggest MMO



32 PRINCE OF PERSIA



26 DEAD SPACE



44 PROJECT ORIGIN



## EXCLUSIVE! HANDS-ON WITH THE EXPLOSIVE SEQUEL

"Crytek are set on taking their game away from the technological PC elite"

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ZONE CHAT!  
BLOGS!



**38 A NEW WAR**  
The classic FPS returns to WWII in *Call of Duty: World at War*

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## WHAT'S ON THE COVER?



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**Too busy? PC ZONE in 66 words...**  
Yeah, we've got a huge *Project Origin* hands on, a massive *Crysis Warhead* first look, and we uncover the latest in the *Call of Duty* series, but your attention must surely turn to our cover. It's got a man with a gun on it, hot on one side and cold on the other. If we were him we'd rotate gently like a rotisserie chicken, for balance.

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Closing date: 17 July, 2008. Full offer details on page 104.

# MEET THE TEAM

Whatever the challenge: they are ready



**ED ZITRON**  
Rhinestone Cowboy  
AGE: 22  
LIKES: Expensive whisky  
DISLIKES: Rodeo  
FANCIES: More whisky  
FAVOURITE GAME: Anything with 'grat' in  
NOW PLAYING: *Age of Conan*



**STEVE HOGARTY**  
Crown Prince  
*Trials 2.0* now controls Hogarty's every emotion – but mostly his anger and frustration. Were he to see a flaming hoop for real he'd have a nervous breakdown.  
NOW PLAYING: *Trials 2.0*



**JAMES ROFF**  
Artistic Genius  
James says his train is always cancelled, but his stained fingers and orange Joker smile betrays the truth: instead of coming in, he sits at home and eats Wotsits.  
NOW PLAYING: *Footsie*

This month Ed visited Los Angeles, where he was allowed in to Saddle Ranch – the place where the games industry drinks, because they lack imagination. And because there's a bucking bronco that nubile women are encouraged to go on in case their tops fly off. This night Zitron clambered onto the mechanical beast's back and clung on for dear life. Was a little too much of our young Ed on display as he rocked back and forth? Fifty diners declining to eat their rump steak would suggest so...



**DALE PRATELY**  
Quitter and Surrender Monkey  
Smooth, good-looking, talented, good at *PES*... we knew Dale would outgrow us. It's a shame we're obliged to detest him from now on really. The turncoat prick.  
NOW PLAYING: *Some IPC game*



**WILL PORTER**  
Increasingly glum  
Aside from staring at spreadsheets and muttering hideous obscenities under his breath, lately Will has been found sitting at a pub table and shouting them.  
NOW PLAYING: *RTCW*



**JAMIE SEFTON**  
Domestic slave  
Sefton amazed us with the news there's an IKEA up North. And they do a vegetarian hot dog that's "Y'know, reasonable". More domestic excitement, next month!  
NOW PLAYING: *Turok*



**LOG**  
Monolith marauder  
Log walked into the internet area of a Seattle hotel and interrupted a man websurfing for gay sex. The gent was so flustered he left a chocolate bar. Which Log then ate.  
NOW PLAYING: *Project Origin*

**WHAT'S HELPED THIS MONTH...** Saving the environment, Vampire Weekend, and the fascinating history of underground Seattle.  
**WHAT HASN'T HELPED THIS MONTH...** More things than you could possibly ever imagine.

## What we've been talking about...

**CRYYSIS: THE PSYCHO CHRONICLES** 67min Can such a numpty pull off being a lead character?

**NICE PEOPLE** 10min A nice lady gave Will all the coins that fell out of his trouser leg at Victoria station.

**NASTY PEOPLE** 11min Someone pushed past Log on the Tube, so he called her a "rude bitch".

**INDIANA JONES AND THE KINGDOM OF THE CRYSTAL SKULL** 87min You'd have thought we would have seen it coming...

**AGE OF CONAN** 77min A bit rum that we don't get the DirectX 10 version at launch isn't it?

**HOW RUBBISH HAZE IS** 20min Twelve people stood around a PS3 laughing at it made for the best Friday night in months.

**THE SIMS: IKEA STUFF PACK** 12min Somewhere a rough beast, its hour come round at last, slouches towards Bethlehem to be born.

**"WANT TO HELP YOU PITCH YOUR TENT"** 45min Thanks to Log's flustered hotel friend and Craigslist the terms 'top' and 'bottom' are explained.

**KASPAROV'S FLYING PENIS** 3min Just what did we do before YouTube?

**TEAM FORTRESS 2 GOLD RUSH** 22min Pushing a mine cart slowly along a track is the best multiplayer fun ever. Despite the choke points.

WIN!



**HOW TO ENTER MINI-COMPO:** For your chance to win £1000 follow up your answer, name and address on page 674/6, email [pzv@magazines.co.uk](mailto:pzv@magazines.co.uk) or post/fax to: Mini-Compo, PCZV, 674/6, Kingsway, London NW1 2DU. The winner will be picked at random from all correct entries received and must include a copy of Rainbow Six: Vegas 2. The winner will receive 26 days of free reading time. Texts will be charged at 25p/min plus your normal network tariff. By entering this competition you consent to giving your personal details to the publishers for the purpose of administering the competition.

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ONE MAN. ONE NIGHT. ONE APOCALYPTIC SECRET.

# ALONE IN THE DARK



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# LETTERS



**Will Porter despairs at the lack of proper letter writing etiquette these days...**



## KING OF LETTERS



### OLD MAN OF THE HILLS

Pah! These callow youths with unfallen testicles and their boasts of 10 years of collecting PC ZONE. Behold! Yes, every single issue, every floppy, CD and DVD, every free book, poster and supplement. Bow down you whelps – you gaze on true sadness! I'm so old that my son (who must have been conceived during a power cut, or else isn't mine at all) is now reading PC ZONE. Soon he will have to read it to me since I'm also so old that I can no longer read the Tiny Compo either with or without my glasses (this is true).

No doubt you wish to ask such a venerable reader what my age and experience has taught me.

Well, the best games of all time were Catacomb Abyss, the original Space Hulk, Prince of Persia, Doom, Duke Nukem 3D and Half-Life. It has taught me that

although wrestling drivers into memory and fixing interrupt conflicts was a pain in the arse, there was a discipline and purity in working with scarce resources that put the emphasis where it belongs – on gameplay and atmosphere.

Though dimming eyesight, arthritic fingers and reactions that can be timed with a calendar now reduce me to cannon fodder for the dumbest of bots, I shall read on. For I still have one dream, one goal, one unfulfilled ambition that drives me. That is to finally win something in one of your bloody competitions after all these years.

*Paul Moorhead*

**Dear God. This is like talking to raw archaeology – a store of ancient lore. Truly you are a man of another age, all but unknowable to mere whelps such as myself. Please accept my tribute of being crowned King of Letters.**

## WIN!



Want to be King of Letters? Then you'd better put pen to paper, or if you're at all PC-literate (which we're guessing you are) fingers to keyboard. The winner will get £100 worth of free games, and decent ones from a genre you like as well. Not just any old shit. (The one's you get won't be the ones we've pictured by the way, unless you're mad keen on them.)

*Space Hulk: a classic.*



### BANG BANG

I've just been looking at all of the first-person shooters that I own and I've realised that none of them have decent gun sounds.

If you've been around live fire weapons or been to one of those military re-enactments then you'll know what I mean. When guns fire you can actually feel the bang in your chest and when you've got a large number of weapons firing at one time it's deafening. So why don't game developers include real gun sounds? It seems the only real gun sounds exist in the modding world (*Battlefield 2's Project Reality mod* and *Half-Life 2's Insurgency mod* to name a couple). Proper gun sounds makes being

shot at really frightening and in turn makes you feel oh so much cooler when you start returning fire.

Games like *Call of Duty 4* present us with woefully bad gun sounds, with machine guns sounding like those rain maker tubes you used in primary school and grenades that sound like amplified farts. I can't honestly imagine that real guns sounds are hard to come by (particularly for companies based in the USA) and proper guns sounds add so much more to the experience of a shooter (or an RTS for that matter).

So go on game developers, I dare you to give us some proper, full-on speaker rocking gunfire!

*William Richardson*





**"I got a game off of a PC ZONE floppy disk about 10-13 years ago and it was called Arghhh: The Pirate Game"**

*Sid Meier's Pirates!* is the closest thing we can find to Arghhh...

Believe it or not, the majority of gunshot effects in modern shooters are based on real guns being fired - COD4 included.

Guns are fired either in a studio or outside (the Rainbow Six: Lockdown developers once told me they recorded shots in a desert at night to get the perfect sound) and then are put into the game through various audio mixers and production tools.

This is the point that your ire is presumably provoked because its assumed most gamers don't want to be deafened by constant, terrifying noise - certainly not over the six hours of relentless explosions COD4 provides. Maybe one day there'll be an option in the menu to turn on the full-pelt gun recordings, until then you'll just have to turn the volume up.

### NAUTICAL QUERY

This might be a bit of a strange request. I got a game off of a PC ZONE floppy disk about 10-13 years ago and it was called Arghhh: The Pirate Game. It was a turn based game, and I loved it. I've looked and I've looked though, and I can't find it anywhere. Can you help?

Nic

Can anyone help Nic in this plight? I had a Google for it,

but somehow found myself on a specialist erotica website in which school-girl outfitted, handcuffed Japanese ladies get custard pies thrown at them. This is true.

### NAUGHTY NAUTICALS

If you listen to various developers, the distinct impression you get is that piracy is forcing them to turn away from PCs and focus on consoles. The list of people who have suggested it is growing all the time: Chris Taylor, Peter Moore, Mark Rein, Tim Sweeney, Cevat Yerli...

Nobody is disputing that piracy for PC games is a real problem, but it's not as bad as it is currently being portrayed and consoles are not the pirate-free utopia these people are claiming.

I have heard some very spurious arguments from people to justify this stance. Chris Taylor said in an interview for Games For Windows that the sales figures for high-end graphics cards were dramatically higher than the sales of high-end PC games like COD4 and this was used to measure the level of piracy. This may be valid as a finger-in-the-air gauge, but is plainly unscientific.



Want to know a PC game release date? Need advice on what graphics card to buy? Just want somewhere to rant incoherently in 'youth speak'? Simply text the PC ZONE Txperts' (see what we did there?) and we'll answer you right here...

The bloke who couldn't find chickens in *Crysis* was probably playing on low settings. Hens eat up those polygons.

Chris

Mystery solved. Tropical wildlife doesn't favour low-end graphics cards. Shame really...

Tell Log that Max Hastings' column on the Conservative Party was far better than his effort in this morning's *Guardian*.

Anon

If Max Hastings were to write something about getting locked out of his house with his trousers falling down, I'd like to read it.

What the hell happened to *Joint Ops*? StevieG

The sniper haven that was once *Joint Ops* seems to have disappeared from the record.



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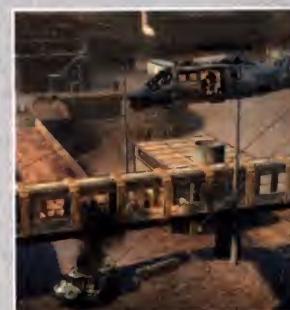
FRONTLINES: FUEL OF WAR

Sent in by Andy Madge

PC ZONE score: 63%

Could I just chip in and say that playing *Frontlines* is as much fun as walking into a door? A door with knives on the edge? No, perhaps that's too harsh. My problem with it isn't that it's poorly made but more that it's just so much of a non-entity. After a game of *Battlefield* you come out with happy memories of amusing things that happened. After playing *Frontlines* I made myself a brew and settled down to wistfully recall my more impressive kills - but my memory was blank. All I could recall was dust and little else. This is what senility feels like.

Your shout: 41%



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Joint Ops: MIA.

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In the same piece, Josh Mosqueira from Relic claimed the number of patch downloads for *Company of Heroes* was significantly higher than the number of game sales, which again was suggested as proof of the level of piracy. This sounds reasonable, but only when you don't take into account people re-installing games or Windows.

What's more, the whole concept of consoles being free of piracy is bunk. Look at how *GTA IV* was being pirated before release. I have spoken to people who say they haven't paid for console games for ages because they can download them. I'm certainly not condoning it, I am just highlighting it.

There are solutions, such as online registration - I just wish developers would be more honest about their reasoning for turning away from PC exclusivity. Piracy is a factor, but that is all it is - constantly blowing it out of proportion is disingenuous.

The real reason is that consoles are cheaper, more people own consoles that can play the latest games than high-end PCs, and console games work without having to factor in an assortment of hardware and software configurations.

**Adrian Ward**

**Good points, but I think its fair to say that its more of a faff to pirate and play console games than those on PC. What's more PC users are more technically minded than most console owners when it comes to torrents and cracks etc.**

**I think it's sadly inevitable that developers are getting ever more worried about the PC's pirate problem now that developing games has become multi-million**



The violence of *GTA IV* is coming to PCs. Sometime. In the far future.

**dollar development affairs. But you're right that safeguards are now coming into existence. We're certainly going to see more *BF Heroes*-style online profiles from now on.**

### CLEVER UTTERANCE

The mass media seems to be having another self-righteous hissy fit. Toys, *GTA IV* included, are being thrown out of prams and crazed accusations are being spewed by wild-eyed moralistic numpties. It's led me to think about the influence of games biologically.

Violent games appeal to the budding tribe leader in all of us - the brutal savage that wants to be the alpha of their clan. Yet the aggressive behaviour that would have been advantageous in our past is now culturally unacceptable. I believe violent games are a result of these repressed instincts, and not necessarily a cause of violent behaviour.

Since we first held sticks we have hit each other over the head. Was this due

to provocative cave etchings? Culture has an important influence on us and, yes, a violent culture will beget more violence, but violent videogames are not real violence and the evidence suggests they do not lead to more crime.

Of course, we're not genetically controlled robots, DNA doesn't control our lives - each time I use a condom I go against my genes - but that doesn't mean they have no effect. Butchered hordes of enemies whilst protecting those close to us (a staple of most games) sounds like Hamilton's kin selection theory of evolution to me (look it up!), a theory which certainly relates to the behaviour of most animals. It's also a far more natural system than the *Daily Mail's* vision of a repressed '20s, "How's the tea vicar?", polite-fest.

**Sam Cheney**

**Have you been off to university clasping a copy of *The God Delusion* by any chance? Whatever happened to the days when people wrote into magazines asking how to kill big aliens, or send in random pictures of themselves with confusing explanations of what they're doing in them?**

### FREE HAT

My son went today to get the latest copy of your magazine. As he was opening the plastic he said, "A hat!". I turned around to look at this freebie and had to laugh and send you a photo of the free gift.

**DescartesMum**

**Ah, it looks like we're not out of those particular woods just yet. So, thanks for that - it's always good to share. ☺**

## What's on the PCZ hard drive?

### TRIALS 2.0

Please, come and join the increasingly competitive PCZ motorcycle club! We're all there - the group is called PCZone and the password is zoneface. Hoops of fire haven't been this exciting since *Record Breakers*!

### BEN THERE DAN THAT

The latest creation from Gibbage creator and PCZ buddy Dan Marshall and his mate Ben. It's a homage to LucasArts of yore and loving yet platonic male-male relationships, and it's very, very good.

### RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN

Hasn't aged well, but it has Nazis in it. And we haven't shot any Nazis in ages.

### MASS EFFECT

A *Star Wars* adventure, just without the *Star Wars*. Excellent!

## WHAT'S ON YOUR HARD DRIVE?

### THIS MONTH: LEKY

### COMPANY OF HEROES

Brilliant RTS made all the better by the excellent *Europe in Ruins* mod.



### BATTLEFIELD 2

God how I hate it. Thing is, *Project Reality* is one of the greatest mods I've ever played.

### HALF-LIFE 2

Still great. And yes I have a shit-load of mods for it as well.

Want to tell us what's on your HDD? Visit the forums at [pczone.co.uk](http://pczone.co.uk) and let rip.



## PCZONE AROUND THE WORLD



We want photos of you with PC ZONE in the most exotic or inappropriate locations. Candid celeb shots count double. Every one printed wins a prize!

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**COVER STORY**

# CRYYSIS WARS

A smouldering island, a restless alien hive, a fully-charged nanosuit and a few hundred angry Koreans. Welcome back to paradise



**T**HE EXPLOSIONS IN *Crysis* were beautiful, but you know what? There weren't enough of them. Keeping the stealth, but adding a few kegs of gelignite when everything goes wrong, *Crysis Warhead*'s stated aim is to match frozen beauty with licking flames that can run on a moderately specced machine. Can it be true? With better AI, a fresh Korean offensive and some adventurous graphical tweaks, Crytek reckon they've not only addressed their creation's occasional (yet glaring) flaws with *Warhead*, but created something that surpasses it in every direction. Have they succeeded? Read on...

Page  
**50**



PCZONE

## UPFRONT

Everything that matters in the world of PC gaming

## DRM beat

**M**ICROSOFT WILL BE shutting down their MSN Music licensing servers come 31 August, snapping the legal tether between the defunct MSN Music Store and its customers' music tracks. The result? Music that you can't move between computers ever again – this is digital rights management at its most heinous.

Valve have a system where if they became unable to authenticate games on Steam, a universal patch would slide down your broadband to wipe your games' copy protection. So if Valve goes bust, Steam's dying act would be to release your purchased games from their corporate shackles.

But what about *BioShock* and *Mass Effect*'s copy protection? EA were ready to require copies of *Mass Effect* be authenticated online every 10 days, before bowing to gamers' anger and reducing the protection to a one-off online check, but (as we go to press) a limit of three activations. *BioShock* only gave buyers three activations, which 2K Games, after complaints, increased to five – an arbitrary limit that hinders nobody but honest gamers. Publishers clearly don't have a clue, putting outrageous restrictions in place before whipping them away at the last minute.

Perhaps they could take on the admirable stance of Stardock, who offer incentives to buy *Sins of a Solar Empire* rather than barriers to honest gamers and thieves alike. But I'll let you know as soon as that monkey flies out my arse.

Steve Hogarty section editor

## STOP PRESS!

## SPLASH ATTACK

Bethesda (*Fallout 3*) are working with Splash Damage (*Enemy Territory: Quake Wars*) on a new brand. This suggests Bethesda have their publisher hats on.

## STEAM CLOUD

The next Steam update will introduce Steam Cloud – a background service which'll store your saves and configs online. Loads more info next month.

## PROTECT AND SEVER

Newly formed Polish developers Gingerbread have announced *The Protector*, a third-person shooter with – as far as we know – an ace script. Keep an eye on this.

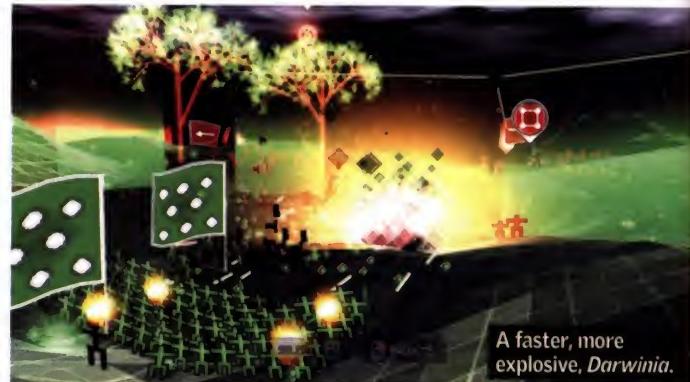
## FOR DARWIN

**Steve Hogarty ruffles some polygons in *Multiwinia***PUBLISHER Introversion DEVELOPER Introversion WEBSITE [multiwinia.com](http://multiwinia.com) ETA September

**T**HE AMORPHOUS SMUDGE of genre attributed to *Darwinia* – that blend of *Cannon Fodder* action games, *Populous* god games and any given RTS – has become that bit more confused with its multiplayer sequel, *Multiwinia*. Now we've got to add *Worms* to the games that it resembles – it's got crate drops.

Introversion have given us the keys to two of *Multiwinia*'s six game modes, namely King of the Hill and Capture the Statue. The former will be familiar to most, a mode in which an area of the map must be kept occupied in order to accrue points. And the latter works like Capture the Flag, but with the Darwinians ferrying captured statues back to base automatically.

The game feels immediately refined, shedding *Darwinia*'s fluff in favour of an extremely neat and stylised strategy ethos – capture spawn points which belch out Darwinians loyal to your cause, weak as individuals but powerful in numbers. Promote a Darwinian to an

A faster, more explosive, *Darwinia*.

officer and he'll act as a guide, pointing nearby Darwinians to a designated rally point, or become a rally point where Darwinians form in strengthened ranks.

That's where *Multiwinia* jumps from the RTS genre into something different – officers sending reinforcements across the map transform Darwinians from RTS units into a sort of fluid strike force. Crates fall from the sky, tempting you to send a splinter group to retrieve the prize

inside, be it an air strike (from *Space Invaders*-style polygonal ships), a gun turret, an armoured vehicle, or any number of bonuses. The whole thing feels faster and more explosive than *Darwinia*.

And with yet to be revealed game modes such as Assault (attack or defend a base), Rocket Riot (power up and launch a rocket) and Blitzkrieg (capture crucial control points), *Multiwinia* will be a powerhouse of multiplayer gaming.



Darwinians will go to great lengths for a cuppa.



Look familiar?



All is well.

**38**

## Call Of Duty: World At War

Find out why you should start giving a shit about World War II again.

**44**

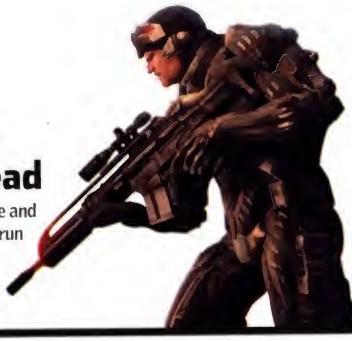
## Project Origin

The true sequel to *F.E.A.R.* has finally arrived.

**50**

## Crysis Warhead

More explosive and more likely to run on your PC.



# PC IN CRYYSIS?

**Crytek outline their stance on PC gaming**

WEBSITE [www.crytek.com](http://www.crytek.com)

**C**RYTEK CEO CEVAT Yerli recently said that his company's PC exclusives were being put in jeopardy by piracy.

"We grew up as a PC company and we love doing PC games, and we have managed to put out two decent PC games that show what the platform can do," explained Crytek's senior game designer Bernd Diemer in response to our panic.

"For us as a company, as a business strategy, it all hinges on what happens in the market. Like all companies these days we question which platform is best

for our games, and right now it's the PC as we do some really great PC games.

"Whether we keep doing these PC-exclusive titles, only the market can tell – because some things that happened to *Crysis* didn't make us too happy."

In fact, it appears that *Crysis Warhead* is Crytek's last throw of the dice. "I don't know the number we've quoted, how many we have to sell of *Warhead*, to keep us making PC exclusives, but..." trailed off Diemer, before looking plaintive in front of our reporter.

Let's hope *Warhead* racks up bumper sales then.

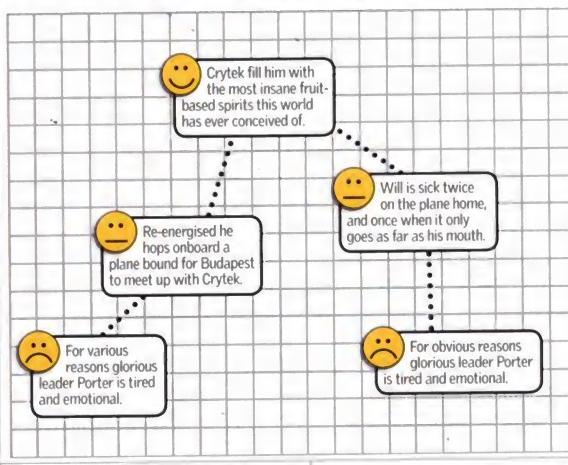
*Crysis* was heavily pirated.



### STUFF

Take a large dollop of games, add a sprinkle of democracy, and then add two teaspoons of magic, and what do you get? That's right, the Golden Joystick Awards 2008. Head over to [goldenjoystick.com](http://goldenjoystick.com) where a form will be waiting expectantly to register your thoughts on what you believe were the best games of the last year of our lives. Fill this in so we can get dressed up smart and sit around round tables and drink champagne for an evening. But, most of all, do it for the games. Because it's the games that matter.

## Life is a rollercoaster

**GOOD TIMES****ON THE FENCE****BAD TIMES**

# FLIGHTS OF FANCY

High on the wings of love, Pavel Barter explores the fascination with virtual aviation



**Reporter**  
Pavel Barter

## CONTROVERSY. VIDEOGAMES.

**TWO** words that tend to snuggle up to each other. But it's hard to believe that, for a spell, the most contentious game of all was not your run-of-the-mill murder/death/kill title, but a flight simulator.

When terrorists flew planes into the New York World Trade Center's towers in 2001, allegations abounded that they had practiced on *Microsoft Flight Simulator*. The horrified software giant promptly delayed the release of their 2002 version and deleted the destroyed towers from its New York scenery.

The ripples of 9/11 were also felt on our side of the Atlantic says John Davis, flight sim fan and owner of a 747 cockpit at his home in Coventry: "A few companies in England hire time, for the general public, on British Airways simulators. They were not allowed to do so for at least a year after 9/11. Now they check your background and your passport before you use them."

Flight simulators can't be blamed for terrorist attacks, but this controversy illustrates just how realistic simulation software has become. While RPG fans



croon over *Oblivion's* shimmering fields and first-person shooter enthusiasts stare endlessly at light diffusing through *Crysis'* lush foliage, the flight simulators' relentless quest for realism is almost endearing. Like Haley Joel Osment in *A.I.*, before he grew up and went a bit potty.

## VIRTUALLY REAL

Bruce Williams, a real-world pilot who's worked on six versions of *Microsoft Flight Simulator* – from *Flight Simulator 95* through to *Flight Simulator X* – explains: "[In my role] I co-ordinated with partners in the aviation industry – aircraft manufacturers, data supplies, and organisations like the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association. I also guided the discussions about each new version, proposing features, aircraft and other details that the individual teams then decided on and implemented."



PC simulation, he says, has transformed dramatically in terms of graphics over the years. "But there's so much more under the cowling: ATC (Air Traffic Control), real-world weather, thousands of airports and their supporting infrastructure."

On the surface, flight sims appear to have more in common with pigeon fancying, train spotting and other hobbies that middle-aged men get obsessive about. But ever since their inception, flight sims have been a core part of PC gaming. In 1975 Bruce Artwick created *Flight Simulator*, the first flight sim of its kind, which was ultimately bought by Bill Gates and morphed into the Microsoft series. Artwick's *Flight Simulator* and its subsequent incarnations, laid the groundwork for gaming in the form of 3D graphics.

Flight sims were among the first games to have online play and modding. Today, their online community amounts to hundreds of thousands of enthusiasts, many of whom design virtual airlines, aircraft, scenery and entire simulations. In 1997, Curt Olsen made a new sim called *FlightGear* ([flightgear.org](http://flightgear.org)) "a community driven, open-source project based on open protocols, supporting libraries and communication, and distributed bug squashing". *FlightGear* is now a collaborative effort involving hundreds of bedroom developers.

Realism is *FlightGear*'s ultimate goal, Olsen says. "[We have] aircraft designers developing complex gear animations and retraction sequences, and building advanced fly-by-wire flight control systems, specific to a particular aircraft. We have designers building fully animated, fully interactive 3D cockpits, and modelling complex aircraft and cockpit systems..."

At one point, Olsen even decided to add real stars, sun, and moon graphics. "I discovered that if I put the moon and



Is this FSX? We can't tell these days.



"Kiss my left nut  
congestion charge."



Sir Alan Sugar prepares to check out his new houseboat.

## "The flight simulators' relentless quest for realism is almost endearing"

the sun in the correct place, relative to the Earth, and then illuminate the moon based on the relative direction of the sun. I suddenly had a moon with the proper phase for the current date." Now, "FlightGear's sky exactly matches the real-world sky for any particular location, time and date."

Virtual aviation fans are committed, and not necessarily in the way of the men in the white coats. John Davis built a flight deck in his home, replicating every switch and sound in a Boeing 747.

"I've spent £15,000 on the project since 1999," he says. "I started off with

a 747 program, with flying visuals from Microsoft, to add to the experience. I networked extra computers, then built a mock panel. Gradually, I added more bits until I had a full-size cockpit. It's not stuff you get in IKEA – a lot of work goes into putting it all together – but you can buy a lot of it off-the-shelf."

### SUPPORT FROM PROS

Davis, who can be found at the website 747simulator.co.uk, has forged a living out of his cockpit, taking people on virtual trips and teaching them the virtual ropes. Every year, he and his pilot mates take part in World Flight, a charity event that involves a simulated circumnavigation of the globe, in real time. Do flight sim fanatics do this stuff for fun?

"They do," Davis says. "People want the experience to be as realistic as possible, so some will sit for up to 12 hours flying to Australia."

Twelve hours is nothing to your average bug-eyed, dysentery-ridden



This will never, ever be you.

## Sim of all parts

Simulations guaranteed to bring you down to Earth with a dull thud

### On the buses

Drive the bus. Park the bus. Pick up passengers in the bus. The tedium, the monotony, the horror: it's like a form of penance, only the devils aren't sticking pitchforks in your ribs, they're handing you 50p. You get to drive eight different models of vehicle in *Bus Simulator 2008*, traversing different districts of a city. But aren't simulations meant to be like real life? Where are the chavs tearing up the seats, or the loner staring aggressively at women?



### Off the rails

Attracting admirers who scribble in notebooks and dribble at the sight of a locomotive with a hint of steam, train sims are peculiar beasts. No shocks here, since trains go from A to B, without detours into headcrab-infested valleys, or fields full of Nazis with howitzers. Sadly, the likes of *Microsoft Train Simulator* fails to capture the true essence of public transport: delayed by an hour, no seats and your nose encased in a fat man's armpit.



### The perfect storm

Experience life at sea, without the sickness or scurvy. Games like *Ship Simulator 2008* are new ways of experiencing the oceans without wetting your toes. Well, for effect perhaps you could dip your feet in a bowl of saltwater while charting a course with cruise liners, yachts and fishing trawlers. In *Ship Simulator 2006*, you could drive the Titanic into icebergs, but couldn't paint Kate Winslet in the nip or drown Leonardo Di Caprio. Rubbish.



World of Warcraft player, but some might question the sheer monotony of realtime flight, for example. VATSIM (Virtual Air Traffic Simulation Network) attempts to simulate real-world aviation, with real schedules and even real delays.

"Online communication has moved to full voice communication," says Ruth McTighe, VATSIM's vice-president of communications. "Our software has become increasingly realistic – we have both *Squawkbox* (*squawkbox.ca*) and *FSinn* (*mcdu.com*) to allow pilots to connect to the network, and three air traffic control programs which are amazingly close to the screens used in the real world."

Ever any chance of a crash? "Quite a few. We try not to, obviously, but given the varying levels of experience of the pilots and the complexity of some of the aeroplanes, planes crash sometimes. It's very rare to have a mid-air collision. From my own experience, I'd say bad landings are the commonest problem."

While a lot of real-world aviation professionals are baffled by this whole affair, many participate. McTighe says VATSIM's members include real pilots,

controllers and flying instructors. Some pilots, in their early days of training, practice on Davis' virtual jumbo jet in Coventry. Williams, meanwhile, has written a book on the subject: *Microsoft Flight Simulator as a Training Aid*.

For many gamers, flight sims might seem an inexplicable form of fun. Their influence, however, should not be underestimated. "As the power of the desktop PC increases," says *FlightGear*'s Olsen, "so too does our ability to draw more complex and detailed models, increase scenery details, support multiple displays and add new graphics effects. We have developers with years of real-world pilot experience and years of aerospace industry experience." Can other developers say the same?

**Is there anything you want Pavel Barter to investigate? (Warning: some jobs might be considered too big or too small...)**

@ letters@pczone.co.uk

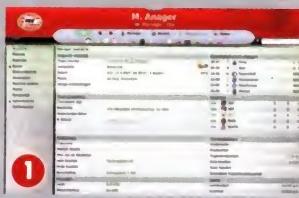
✉ pavel barter, pc zone,

2 balcombe st, london, nw1 6nw

# PCZONE Charts

ChartTrack

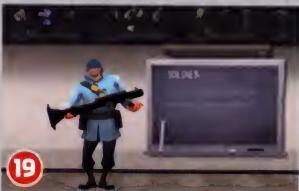
- 1 ↑ FOOTBALL MANAGER 2008  
Issue 188 90%
- 2 ↑ CALL OF DUTY 4: MODERN WARFARE  
Issue 188 89%
- 3 — THE SIMS 2: FREETIME  
Issue 194 70%
- 4 ↓ ASSASSIN'S CREED  
Issue 194 72%
- 5 ↑ WARHAMMER 40,000: DAWN OF WAR - SOULSTORM  
Issue 192 81%
- 6 ↑ CIVILIZATION IV COMPLETE  
N/A
- 7 — THE SIMS 2  
Issue 147 82%
- 8 — WORLD OF WARCRAFT: BATTLE CHEST  
N/A
- 9 ↑ MEDIEVAL II: TOTAL WAR - GOLD EDITION  
Issue 175 91%
- 10 ↓ THE SIMS: CASTAWAY STORIES  
Issue 193 48%
- 11 — THE SIMS 2: BON VOYAGE  
Issue 188 38%
- 12 — CRYYSIS  
Issue 188 92%
- 13 ↓ COMMAND & CONQUER 3: TIBERIUM WARS  
Issue 180 85%
- 14 — CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 2008  
Issue 188 71%
- 15 — RAINBOW SIX: VEGAS 2  
Issue 194 83%
- 16 RE MICROSOFT FLIGHT SIMULATOR X DELUXE  
Issue 175 89%
- 17 RE FRONTLINES: FUEL OF WAR  
Issue 193 69%
- 18 NEW THE SIMS 2: DOUBLE DELUXE  
N/A
- 19 ↓ THE ORANGE BOX  
N/A
- 20 RE UNREAL TOURNAMENT III  
Issue 189 90%

**FOOTBALL MANAGER 2008**

Sitting by the sidelines, managing a sack full of footballs? That sounds positively dull to us.

**COMMAND & CONQUER 3: TIBERIUM WARS**

Bits of tiberium fighting each other? That stuff can't even move. That's a boring war.

**THE ORANGE BOX**

This is the most expensive box ever. So it's orange - why should we care? It's still just a box.

**UNREAL TOURNAMENT III**

This isn't even a real tournament. They've just made this tournament up - how lazy can you get?

# GOOD JORB

**Strong Bad's Cool Game For Attractive People touches down**

WEBSITE [telltalegames.com/strongbad](http://telltalegames.com/strongbad) ETA Out now

**H**OMESTARRUNNER.COM IS A strange thing - a long running American web-comedy that's avoided turning into a stale, self-parodying facsimile of *Family Guy*, and one whose popularity has never coaxed it out of its flash-based web-shackles.

But hey, get this: the first episode of *Strong Bad's Cool Game For Attractive People* will have been released by the time you read this and, under the watchful eye of point-and-click demigods Telltale Games, they'll be parping out more episodes on a near-monthly basis. What's alluring about this whole faray

into adventure gaming is that the website's writers have an editorial chokehold on the whole project - the clever comedy, the voice work, the characters, the retro fascination - everything we love about the website is arriving unscathed, albeit in a strangely clunky 3D format.

A simultaneous PC and WiiWare release (that's Nintendo's game downloading service thing) might be cause for concern though.

Our verdict arrives next month, when we'll have the first episode reviewed totally to bits.



# FINAL SHOWDOWN

**PC ZONE** face off **PC Gamer** at the \*hackspit\* **PC Gamer Showdown**

WEBSITE [www.pcgamershowdown.com](http://www.pcgamershowdown.com)

**W**E FEEL A BIT funny saying this, but *PC ZONE* will be rocking up at the massive LAN event known as the \*hackspit\* *PC Gamer* Showdown on 27-28th September in Stoneleigh Park near Leamington Spa.

We might look a bit confused and be surrounded by the enemy, but it would be lovely if you and your PC, dear reader, could come along. We'll grow solid in our adversity, sitting in the corner and muttering *Team Fortress 2* tactics while doing our best impression of the British forces keeping the foe at bay in the titles of *Dad's Army*. Despite the ignominy of the event name, there will be *PC ZONE*-

based tournaments and frivolity - and if the mewling and whining of *PCG*-ites grow too tiresome on the Saturday night our editor knows the landlord of a bar in nearby Leam that has free pool and would probably be up for a lock-in. Can you match that *PC Gamer*? Thought not.

**PC GAMER SHOWDOWN**

Sponsorship? Sign Up Now! User & Info

Sign up here for the \*hackspit\* *PC Gamer* Showdown.

## IN THE SPOTLIGHT:

# THE MAN WHO'S HAMMERING THE MMO

PAUL BARNETT – LEAD DESIGNER ON *WARHAMMER ONLINE: AGE OF RECKONING*



We've never met somebody who gesticulates as enthusiastically and vigorously as Paul Barnett. His hands are often a blur of activity, and his mouth a frothing kiosk of amazing sound effects. He does this to expertly demonstrate *Warhammer Online*, which he's done to us, right here.

### Q What's the reception to the beta been like?

A Well, our beta comes in three stages. Firstly, internal – that's when one of our clever guys says "Hey, I've made it so you can run into the cities and blow them up," and we all pile into a local server and it explodes and it doesn't work so we put a new chip in and we change the code until it does.

Stage two is closed beta, the stage we're in now. This is the bit where you invite a select group of people in to do targeted testing, so we can say "Hmm, we've had 400 people beating the crap out of this dungeon, let's put 4,000 people in and see what it does." And that's when you flush out all the craziness and go, "Oh that explodes, we need a bigger dungeon, the monsters are too hard, they're too fat, they're too thin, we need more elephants."

The final stage is the open beta, which is like when they say a movie is launching on Friday, but you can come and see it on Tuesday.

As for how it's gone? We've found a load of stupid stuff, we've proved a load

of game ideas, we've disproved a load of game ideas. We've thrown away some of our most darling ideas because they turned out to be crap...

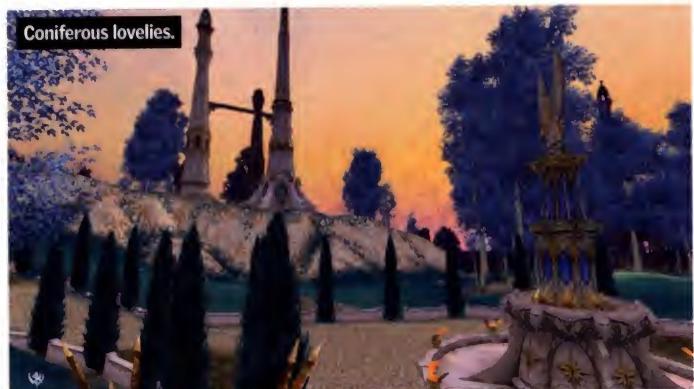
### Oh yeah, like what?

We weren't going to have levelling. We had a different progression system. But people want to know, "How powerful am I and how powerful is he?" So we just gave players levels – clearly that is the answer, and it's what they want.

We stayed away from quite a few of the mechanics of *Dark Age of Camelot* too – boiling oil that you can pour on people's heads, battering rams that can smash your army to pieces, ballistae, trebuchets – but people went, "What are you doing? That's some of the best stuff in *Dark Age!*" Now we've got orcapults and cannons blowing the crap out of things. Those are examples of when we've gone, "We know best! Oh hang on, no we don't..."

### So betas are important...

Betas are like jumping out of an aeroplane without a parachute – you



can practice on the ground all you want, but it's not until you jump out of an aeroplane and it doesn't open that you realise you're fucked.

If we don't throw 5,000 players at it on one server then we don't really see what it's going to do. And players do things that our quality assurance team just don't do – I mean, I like our QA team, but no one really breaks our game like real players, who just do absurd stuff that no one would normally even think of doing.

# tat Zone

A philosopher visited the office today, and he said to us, "How do you know there is not a pile of tat hovering behind you, if that tat stayed behind your head as you turned around to try see it?"

"Ah," we replied, "what if we turned around really quickly?" And we did, and there was a pile of shocked tat there! Do you want it?

Come fish it off eBay, by searching for the 'PCZoners' tag. For great charity!

Buy our tat at [www.ebay.co.uk](http://www.ebay.co.uk)  
All proceeds go to charity. Honest, just visit [entertainmentsoftwarecharity.org/home.aspx](http://entertainmentsoftwarecharity.org/home.aspx)



### THIS MONTH'S TAT



**TRIALS 2 FLAG & CODE**  
Buy the flag and get a free unlock code for the game!  
Buy flag, get code!



**SIERRA BACKPACK**  
People will stop you to say, "You've played those pervy Leisure Suit Larry games!"



**WARHAMMER T-SHIRT**  
This pulled in the charity like a donkey sanctuary, so here it is once again!



**WARHAMMER CAP**  
One size fits all unless you've got a strange, misspelled head.

*If tat falls in the woods and nobody is around to bid, does it make us sad?*

### THE TAT BOARD

COMPARE	ITEM TITLE	SOLD FOR	BIDS
	<b>LEFT 4 DEAD T-SHIRT</b> Everybody needs clothes, and this is an example of rare clothes.	£30	12
	<b>MASS EFFECT T-SHIRT</b> A soundtrack CD came with this one, making it more than just a T-shirt.	£27.25	9
	<b>NVIDIA PAD AND FOREIGN NEWSPAPER</b> Read the fake news, and then write it down.	£12.26	7
	<b>BATTLEFORGE CARDS</b> Mysterious cards. They are demonstrably inedible and possibly evil.	£5.50	4



**Dear Steve Hogarty,**

It is with growing concern that I watch you sink an ever greater proportion of your day into that morbid sponge, *EVE Online*. Having weaned myself off *WOW*, thanks to your helpful comments that it made my face go slack and dead, there you are slinging handfuls of hours into the one game that makes the most hardened *Warcraft*-ian prick wince and say "That's a bit much". Come back, Steve. It's a massive crock of gorgeous space shit.

**Jon 'Log' Blyth**

**Dear Log,**

It is not a "bit much". You only think that because you've been playing the dick-mindedly simplistic *WOW* for so long now, that anything falling outside your blinkered field of clicking-on-things-until-they're-dead-then-clicking-one-more-time-to-have-their-sword expertise seems terrifyingly complex and alien to you. I love *EVE*'s open market, its corporations and its entirely player-led world. It's the only true MMO.

**Steve Hogarty**

**Steve,**

What's great about you saying that is that I can imagine being in the pub with you, and hearing it said by someone on the next table. You would say said "what a pair of shits". Dreary financial shit in a computer game is not cool, Steve. At least in *WOW* you pretend to be a bloody big sexy Orc. You're pretending to be a soulless businessman. **JLB**

**Log,**

No, I'm pretending to be a space-faring entrepreneur, carving my way to the top in a dangerous universe full of epic capital ships blasting the shits out of one another. That's infinitely more interesting than anything you do in *WOW* and therefore my addiction is infinitely more justifiable. You are, quite simply, talking about an inferior game. **SH**

**Steve,**

Jesus, it's like talking to a prick off *The Apprentice*. Done a deal, have you? Shit on the competition, yeah? Got your hands dirty doing what had to be done, right? You're dead to me, Steve. I need a new fun friend at work, because you are completely DEAD TO ME. **JLB**

**Log,**

None of the people on *The Apprentice* are astronauts, are they Log? None of them are buying and selling space prostitutes, are they? If they were, I think Alan Sugar would flip out a nut. What do you think? Do you think Alan Sugar would flip out a nut if one of the contestants was an astronaut? **SH**

**Steve**

If that happened, I would think Alan would fire Buzz Aldrin on the spot for turning up in a space suit and knowing comparatively little about the demands of running a large business. As I can no longer remember what the point was, let me take this opportunity to call you a tit. **JLB**

**Log**

Your new shoes make you look like a twat. **SH**

# A PC PARADISE

**Burnout Paradise finds its way to PC**

WEBSITE [criterionsgames.com](http://criterionsgames.com) ETA TBA

**F**OR THE FIRST time in the history of all things, the console's greatest arcade racer is coming to PC. Not only that, but the game's excursion into this virgin territory will bring with it expanded multiplayer, enhanced online features and more community driven stuff than the console version could imagine up in its wildest fantasies. So yeah, we're the best and all that.

*Burnout Paradise* (if you rightfully ignore anything that is not a PC or a mouse) takes the tradition of the *Burnout* series, extremely fast reflex-testing street racing, and places it in a huge free-roaming city in which races can be raced and challenges accepted. Console owners have been lapping it up for years, with the game's incredibly detailed slow-motion car crumpling effects whipping them into fine consumerist froth.

Developers Criterion announced they'll be porting the game to the PC for



release at an indeterminate point in the future. This bunch are also some of the most passionate, talented and creative developers in Britain, and to have them turn their attention to the PC is enough to make us stand on our desks and trill the national anthem to a picture of the Queen.

More importantly, during their video podcast, they showed the thing running on a two year-old laptop of modest specifications, stating their one of their goals is to keep the game playable on a wide range of PCs. We'll have lots more next month, and if you're lucky, a picture of a car doing a nice, big skid.

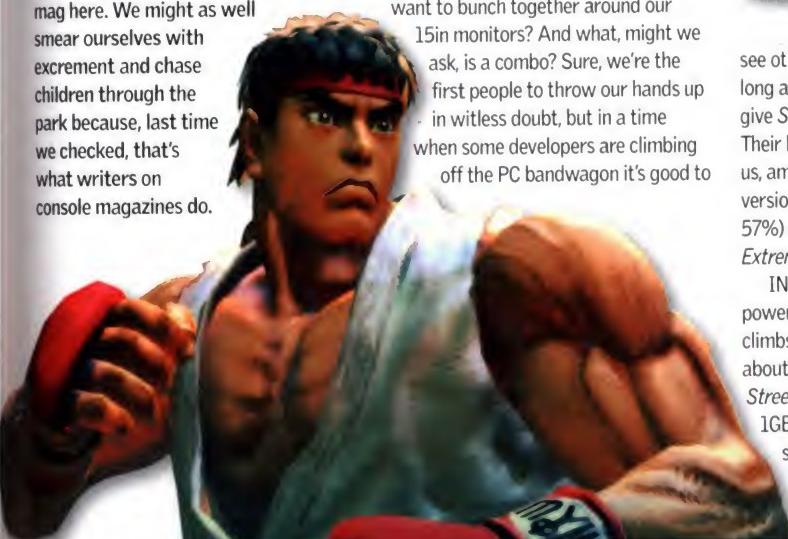


# CHUN-LI ON PC

## Street Fighter IV in PC port shocker

WEBSITE streetfighterworld.com ETA TBA

**B**URNOUT PARADISE ON the left and now Street Fighter on the right – gosh, it feels like we're writing on a stinking console mag here. We might as well smear ourselves with excrement and chase children through the park because, last time we checked, that's what writers on console magazines do.



Accusations aside, *Street Fighter IV*, the latest in the archetypal fighter series, is roundhosing its way on to PC. But won't we need joypads? Will our friends want to bunch together around our 15in monitors? And what, might we ask, is a combo? Sure, we're the first people to throw our hands up in witless doubt, but in a time when some developers are climbing off the PC bandwagon it's good to



see others climbing further on. That is, as long as Capcom actually take steps to give *Street Fighter IV* a half-decent port. Their last excursions to PC land brought us, among others, the abysmal PC version of *Resident Evil 4* (issue 180, 57%) and the not-as-terrible *Lost Planet: Extreme Condition* (issue 184, 66%).

IN *SFIV* new Focus Attacks are powered by a Revenge Gauge, which climbs as your fighter gets knocked about the screen and fans of the old, old *Street Fighter* titles – games from when 1GB of RAM was science-fiction – will shuffle excitedly at the return of the smash-a-car minigame.

Series regulars such as Ryu and Ken make their appearances,



Someone to aspire to ladies.

accompanied by a selection of new fighters – Abel the French martial artist, El Fuerte the Spanish wrestler, the incredibly obese yet acrobatic American Rufus, and Crimson Viper (above) who is fighting for equality and respect in a male-dominated world using her wazzo pair of jugs.

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# EMPIRE: TOTAL WAR

DEVELOPER Creative Assembly PUBLISHER Sega  
WEBSITE [totalwar.com](http://totalwar.com) ETA Autumn 2008



**N**OBODY KNOWS EXACTLY what happened between the years 1700 and 1800, as all documents from that era have been smudged to the brink of readability.

In fact, the only surviving specimen is a crude drawing of a musket, from which we've extrapolated all modern knowledge of the era. And look where it's gotten us, right to the doorstep of what looks set to be Creative Assembly's finest moment yet.

*Empire: Total War* previously impressed us with its beautiful naval battles, but now our focus turns to the land-based warfare, and its shapely, historically accurate muskets.

7



2



3



4

## The Bigger Picture

### 1 WHITES OF THEIR EYES

Your soldiers' 18th century weapons have limited effective ranges. So skirmishes will happen in relatively close quarters.

### 2 ON YER 'ORSE

While horses were falling out of fashion on the battlefields of the 18th century, they were still widely used to flank slower moving infantry and to carry serious firepower.

### 3 HIDE AND SEEK

Take a look at the landscape and you'll notice a lot more crap lying about. Walls and hedges can now be used as cover and buildings can be entered and garrisoned, acting as focal points on the map.

### 4 WE ARE SCIENTISTS

You'll have to reform your government to keep it effective – but the results are clear: improved troops and weapons, such as Britain's favourite stabbing tool, the bayonet.

### 5 CANONICAL

Positioning cannons correctly is vital to success, but badly maintained weaponry might blow up in your face, scaring horses.

### 6 CONQUER? I HARDLY KNEW HER!

Battles are determined by your actions on the almighty campaign map. Several aspects of campaign micromanagement will be streamlined though, such as the chore of sending diplomats about the place.

### 7 AND IT'S PRETTY

*Empire* is resoundingly the most beautiful RTS yet, with water and light effects to die for. Don't underestimate the amount of historical research that's gone into it either.



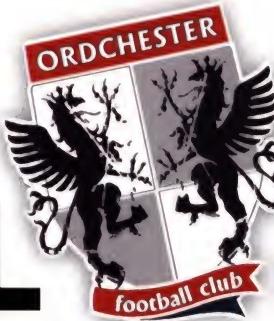
5



6

ETA  
SUMMER  
2008

# FOOTBALL SUPERSTARS



## THE LOWDOWN

A true football MMO	✓
Free to download and play	✓
Up to 11-a-side full 3D online matches	✓
Your player exists in a virtual world	✓
May not compete with Football Manager and PES	✗



I'll stick to performance enhancing drugs thanks.

Frustrated that he isn't a glamourous striker Jamie "Chopper" Sefton signs up for the first true footie MMO...

DEVELOPER Monumental Games PUBLISHER CyberSports WEBSITE [footballsuperstars.com](http://footballsuperstars.com) PREVIOUSLY IN... 189

**I**N THE COMMON room of Monumental Games is a well-used table football kit that we use to pass the time while *Football Superstars* is booting up. Just five minutes of hectic plastic player flicking, ball hitting and guttural swearing is enough to demonstrate how passionate these Nottingham developers are for the beautiful game. *Football Superstars* is an MMO in which fantasy elves and magic swords are replaced by fantasy football and magic on the pitch, giving you the potential to be the next Rooney or Ronaldo – complete with glamorous lifestyles, fame and swimming pools shaped like flamingos.

The idea is simple – you create your own footballer (complete with stylish Keegan '80s perm if you like) and then join in three, five, seven or 11-a-side matches, with thousands of other online players around the world, either as just a friendly virtual kick about or as part of the club league system containing 14 fictitious teams with names such as Cleevepool FC.

This is where you begin to hone your skills as a star striker, a silky midfielder or a lumpen defender, with RPG-style experience points given as rewards during matches that you can spend on character stats, money, better equipment or fame points to increase

your *HELLO!* magazine wedding feature potential. Fergie won't be happy...

## SIM YOU'RE WINNING

*Football Superstars* is about player skill and performance in matches, with stats created using an Elo system that assesses everything from the time you have on the ball to the amount of passes you've completed.

You can also buy your own football club – known in the game as PMCs, player-managed clubs – which are *Football Superstars* equivalent of guilds. You'll be able to name your team (no real-world teams are allowed), design your badge, hang



Five-a-side rarely works on a pitch this big.



The Hide-and-seek Convention got off to a great start.



The Invisible Man Convention got off to a great start.

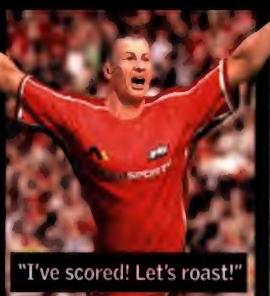
## Glory Hunters

Why being a striker won't always be the best option...

The obvious question with *Football Superstars* is how do you stop everyone being the glory grabbing goal scorer?

"Initially everyone will want to be a star striker," says CEO Rik Alexander, "but you may find over time that you're better actually playing on the wing. We don't overly reward strikers over, say, a defender. If you block nine shots on goal, you'll be rewarded for that as much as scoring a hat-trick."

"Also, it's self-regulating really, as we have thousands of players in one area, so if everyone was a striker, you'd never have a chance of joining a competitive game."



"I've scored! Let's roast!"





Goalies will be AI-driven to begin with.

## "The focus is on you – any glaring mistake or enforced error is met with howls of derision from teammates"

around in your lounge and recruit other players to your team. You can even become a coach or scout – so long as you pay. While the game is free to download and play, you need to subscribe to get access to all of the features and options on offer.

Fortunately, you don't need to pay to get in the game's other major element – the lifestyle world. Here, clean, neatly designed virtual towns are packed with shops, bars, gyms and nightclubs, where you can shop for a new pair of boots to increase your speed (in-game items can be bought with real cash), chat about a recent match using the in-game voice feature, or tap up a journalist to increase your celebrity status – like Second Life for footie nuts.

### FOOTBALL CRAZY

But all this will be as useless as Darren Bent if the matches aren't any fun.

Given the short amount of time I had to get to grips with the FPS-style

controls, and the fact that the game is still in beta, *Football Superstars* shows a lot of promise.

Using mouse look and WASD to move your player in third-person, the space bar to pass and the left mouse button to shoot/tackle, the half-a-dozen Monumental developers and myself had an enjoyable kickabout, with only a few angry shouts of "Dirty Leeds!"

With mouse look, you can pick out teammates to pass to with ease, aiming high for headers or low for grasscutter passes, while the football icon, which points to where the ball is when it's off-screen, is intuitive and easy to grasp.

Within minutes I'm making intelligent runs, calling for passes on the wing (helped by surround sound positioning), drifting past defenders, causing horrific fouls and trying desperately to hold onto the ball – the game's decent physics doing a good job of showing up my lack of goal-scoring abilities. In a game like PES you control the whole team, but in *Football Superstars* the focus is on you – any glaring mistake or enforced error is met with howls of derision from teammates, so you really feel pressure in matches.

Doubts still remain: can it honestly compete for football gamers' play time with the dominant *Football Manager* and PES? Will the lifestyle element put off real footie fans from playing? Will the gameplay deliver entertaining football matches that will keep you coming back? Time will tell, but the fact that *Football Superstars* will be free to download and play – albeit with limited in-game options – means you don't have any excuse to ignore this game when it launches later this summer. **PCZ**

The Punctuality Convention got off to a rubbish start.

# THE TERRIBLE SECRET OF SPACE DEAD SPACE

A terrified *Ed Zitron* runs blindly down corridors, while dismembering gruesome aliens

DEVELOPER EA Redwood Shores PUBLISHER EA  
WEBSITE deadspace.ea.com PREVIOUSLY IN... 191

**"I'd been trained that the headshot was the coup de grâce. Now it was a tactical faux pas"**

ETA  
**OCTOBER  
2008**

**A** DISTRESS CALL A gigantic space ship that excavates dead planets for minerals, and its crew of 1,000 souls, are silent. Even before Isaac Clarke steps onto the ship to investigate what's happened, the situation's grim.

Once he arrives things are already knee-deep in shit. The planet cracker ship has excavated something genuinely evil, that mutates human beings into disgusting, shambling necromorphs, and has the potential to infect passing spaceships. And from there, the rest of the human race.

"When you're creating sci-fi, you've got the big guys like *Alien*, and you don't want to look like them. The idea was to not be like them, and the inspiration was to try and make the scariest game possible," intones Glen Schofield, executive producer of *Dead Space*.

"What I really wanted to make was a sci-fi/horror game. We've had horror games, we've had sci-fi games, but nobody's put the two together. The closest I can think of – as far as sci-fi/horror even goes – was the original *Alien*, and that scared the crap out of me."

*Dead Space* definitely has the feeling of *Alien* – the horrible claustrophobia,

Isaac's low-level, hoarse breathing as he tramps around the corridors of the planet cracker with no enemies in sight, but listening to the sounds of their existence echoing along the metal corridors of the ship.

## DEAD AND LOVELY

The big feature of *Dead Space* is dismembering the disgusting-looking necromorphs, effectively – and in some cases literally – disarming them. The key is that each creature reacts very differently to losing a limb, and, worse still, doesn't give up even if it loses a major part of its anatomy.

For example, slicers have gigantic claws coming out of their abdomens that they swing at you with a degree of sensibility. As I stepped forward and shot off one of their heads, the monster became a whirling dervish of anger, swinging wildly, the AI still having a rough idea of where I was.

I came close to panic – I'd been trained that the headshot was the coup de

## THE LOWDOWN

Grim, cinematic tale	✓
Inspired by the finest stories in horror	✓
Dismemberment is cool and useful	✓
Genuinely scary	✓
Combat can be a little hard to control	✗



## THE STORY SO FAR... EA'S LOGOS

**ELECTRONIC**  
Interlaced squares, circles and triangles – retro chic.



1982

**SPORTY**  
EA Sports gets a logo, and the "It's in the game" slogan.



1995

**SWISH**  
EA took four years to match their regular logo to EA Sports'.



1999

**INTEGRATE**  
Now EA's logo is integrated into game intros – like in *Crysis*.



2007

## Inspiration Station

Where the *Dead Space* team got their groove...

While there're obvious comparisons on looking at *Dead Space* to John Carpenter's *The Thing* and other horror classics, Glen Schofield is adamant that there's not one key filmic spark.

"The truth of the matter is that I've been a sci-fi fan for a long time and a sci-fi artist – I've watched them all. We didn't want one as an inspiration. When you're making a sci-fi/horror game, you want to make something different."

The *Dead Space* team want to scare the player, not gross them out: "We're different to the stuff that people like Eli Roth have made – I look at that like torture porn – I like movies that are scarier, more psychological."



Mr Moody.

How could they cut the power? They're animals.

Some things should stay in the dark...

grace, but now it was a tactical faux pas that nearly gave me a fatal haircut.

"When we said dismemberment was a big key, we mean it adds another dimension to the game. All of a sudden, you cut off a thing's legs, and now you need a whole animation set for crawling. What if you cut off one leg and one arm? Now you need one for that, too. When we integrated it, it was a huge technological and aesthetic challenge – if we were gonna bite this off, we were gonna do it right," nods an enthusiastic Schofield.

Redwood have done this bit right – the most horrifying experience in the game being to find yourself cornered by monstrosities from hell's most repugnant orifices, and then watching these creatures continue to advance towards you, even as you slice limbs and heads from their cadaverous forms.

"For some enemies we say 'Try and dismember him, see what happens,' but there are some that we say 'You better dismember him, or you're going to be in real trouble,'" adds Schofield.



Be gentle. It's my first time.

"You'll even find some that you'll dismember and say 'Oh shit, I shouldn't have done that,' because you don't have the right weapon to deal with the new AI routine."

### SCARE TACTICS

*Dead Space* is looking like it could be a horror classic, as even in the early build we've played, the game has a frightening, claustrophobic and almost realistic feel to it.

The setting is believable with excellent use of ambient sound effects, such as the muffling of noise when Isaac has to use earplugs near an otherwise deafeningly loud reactor.

"We've studied a lot of the science behind what we're doing here, stuff like what happens with fire and liquid in zero-G," explains Schofield. "Everything

that we try and do is really gritty and realistic – we wanted to create what the future would actually be like. Our tagline, the one that the team has been working under and still works under, is 'real space, real terror.'"

You're even trapped alone in Isaac's world, without so much as an inventory menu to hide behind – every option you usually find on a typical third-person HUD is part of Isaac's suit, with even his health being shown as series of columns along his spine.

The game's developers have done a great job of thoroughly shitting up the player, taking what you're expecting and cleverly subverting it. *Dead Space* is on course for release this Halloween, and is more polished and slick every time we see it. So you'd be right to be afraid. Very, very afraid.



Isaac Clarke is named after Isaac Asimov and Arthur C. Clarke.

# YOU SHALL NOT PASS

Pandemic reveal their fantasy battler *Lord of the Rings: Conquest*

WEBSITE [pandemicstudios.com/conquest](http://pandemicstudios.com/conquest) ETA Winter 2008

**WE'RE GUESSING HERE**, but we don't believe JRR Tolkien laid out any plans for a third-person *Lord of the Rings* action game before he passed on. But *Star Wars: Battlefront* developer Pandemic Studios are happy to fill in the blanks.

*Lord of the Rings: Conquest* is basically a version of *Battlefront* set in Middle-earth, drawing from the incredibly successful movie trilogy directed by Peter Jackson and featuring all the universe's battles such as Helm's Deep, Minas Tirith and the Mines of Moria, as well as a few surprise extras.

You can play as four classes in the game, Warrior, Archer, Scout or Mage, on either the side of good with Gandalf and the hobbits, or with those evil berks Sauron and Saruman.

"Personally, I'm a fan of the Scout and his ability to cloak," says the game's director Eric Gewirtz. "He can sneak up behind enemy units while cloaked and do devastating attacks and grabs. Unfortunately, attacking leaves him exposed and he's not so good in head-to-head combat, so you have to keep moving and find a safe place to cloak again. It really adds a whole different dynamic to the game."

If you find you're getting tired of the sneaking-about skullduggery, however, all you do is simply choose a different class when you are killed and (as with multiplayer shooters) jump straight back into the raging battle with new abilities.

The combat melee system has apparently been revamped since the last *Battlefront* game, so that it'll be a very

different – but balanced – experience if you first play as a Warrior in Helm's Deep, then decide later in the battle to take on Saruman's Orc army as an Archer. If you're successful on the battlefield, you'll unlock hero characters such as Aragorn, with his lethal sword-slashing prowess, or evil monsters such as the Balrog, who has a fiery sword with which he can immolate innocents.

There'll also be the ability to ride mounts such as horses and Wargs, and other creatures such as the mighty Oliphants or the tree-like Ents – huge hulking units that move slowly but unleash massive attacks. Plus, Gewirtz is promising that you'll be able to play with a range of siege equipment including giant towers, catapults and battering rams, so the forces of evil can kick Gandalf's back doors in – so to speak.

As well as two full single-player campaigns that can be enjoyed in four-player co-op, there'll also be an instant action mode with up to 16 players able to join in the *Lord of the Rings* hacking and slashing online. While we're yet to get hands-on with *Conquest*, being able to sign up with Sauron's twisted minions, raze Middle-earth to the ground and see those smug elves and hobbits get a sound thrashing is worth getting a tiny bit excited about. Who needs the stupid books anyway? **PCZ**

Deforestation: a side-effect of evil.

A headache for town planners.



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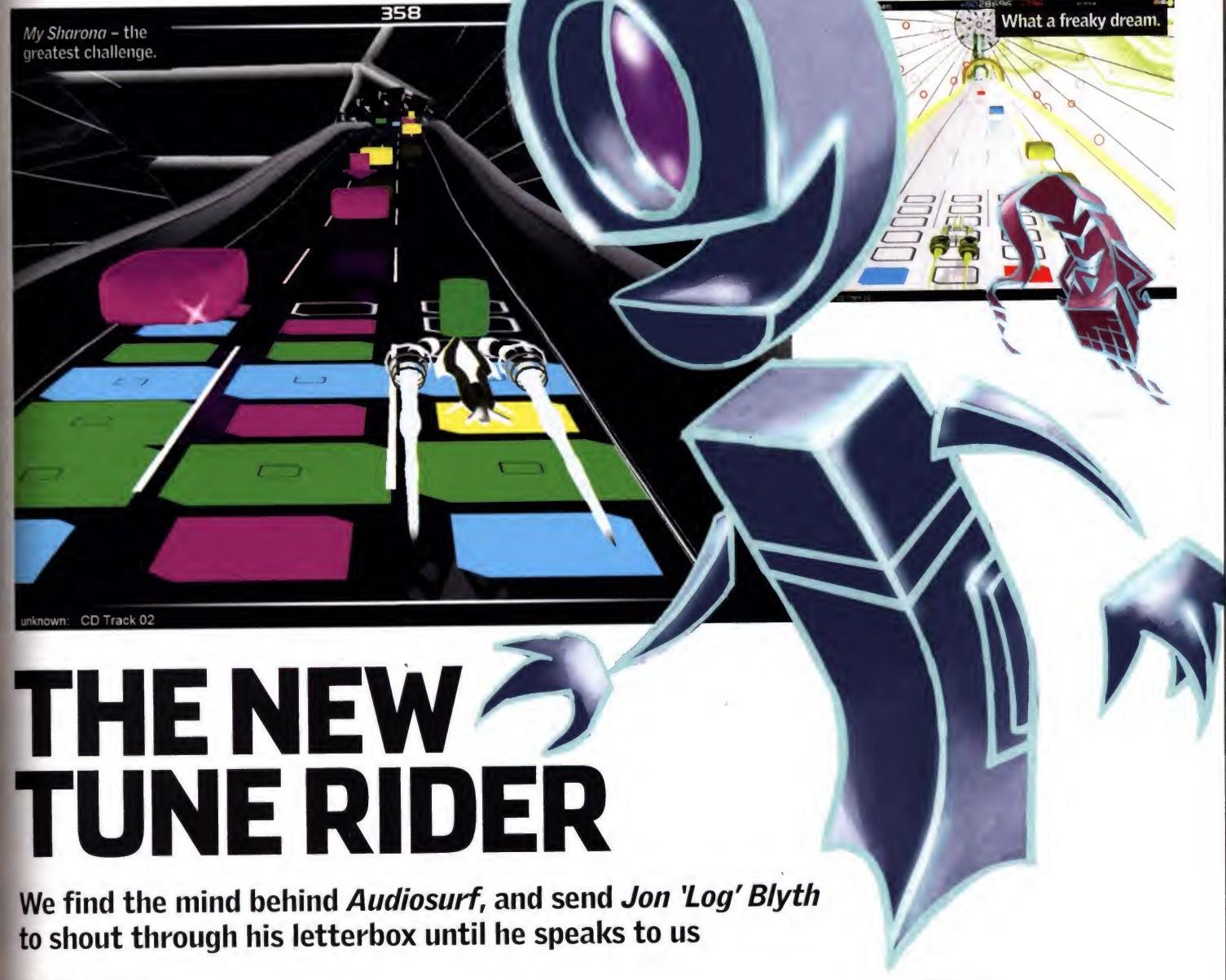
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UNBELIEVABLE  
DESTRUCTION

READY FOR BATTLE JUNE 27



# THE NEW TUNE RIDER

We find the mind behind *Audiosurf*, and send Jon 'Log' Blyth to shout through his letterbox until he speaks to us

WEBSITE [audio-surf.com](http://audio-surf.com)

**D**YLAN FITTERER MADE one game a week and gave them away for free on his website, BestGameEver.com.

This ironic title became less obviously ironic when the Fitterer spawned *Audiosurf* – a track-racing block-matching game that uses the music on your computer to generate unique, and often bewildering levels, to a soundtrack you're guaranteed to like.

We cornered a terrified Fitterer and fired a question or two at him – such as, where on Earth did *Audiosurf* appear from?

"I was able to keep up the free game per week for 24 weeks," recalls the modest indie developer. "Of those, my favourite was called *Tune Racer* – so I took that one and just kept hammering on it until it was finally *Audiosurf*."

If hammering sounds like a laborious

process, that's because it was – it took four years of development before the game was ready to be launched on Steam. How was that four years spent?

"Tweaking the algorithm that turns music into a playable level took a long time," Fitterer sighs, "but the main reason it took such a long time was because I tried so many things that sucked. And I had to delete that stuff and move on."

"When I started out, I was really stuck on the idea of it being a shooter. I had this boss battle mode, where you're shooting by creating colour matches, with lots of minions coming at you. While this was kind of interesting, but it just wasn't fun. That was a lot of time burned, but it was something I had to learn wasn't good."

*Audiosurf* has attracted musicians who want to act as level designers (see

ThisIsNotALabel.com for five free songs designed to make interesting levels) and crazily dedicated players (visit [snipurl.com/surferhero](http://snipurl.com/surferhero) to see kEn\_SCT's heroic performance on rock epic *Through The Fire And Flames*), but was the game's steep difficulty curve a problem?

"My wife Elizabeth tested it with people from our community," Fitterer explains. And not the indie developer community, either: "We put ads out in the local area. We paid \$30 for people to come around and play the game for half an hour."

These meetings led to Fitterer developing the easier Mono mode, which was originally intended just as a tutorial. "It was way too hard," he freely admits. But getting it right was why *Audiosurf* took four years.

The leap to Steam has made Fitterer's game available to the masses, a success

story by anyone's standards. Valve got in touch after the game had been nominated for numerous indie awards and even bundled *The Orange Box* soundtrack with the game. But does the involvement with Valve Corp come at a price? Not according to Fitterer.

"Valve were just great. They gave me an early copy of the SDK, and held my hand through everything. They made it really easy."

But the bastards must have stuck their oar in with the achievements, yeah. "Nah, I just told them what I wanted. Valve made no editorial decisions."

"This is what's so attractive about the PC and Steam – you're so close to your customers. If I want to get a new feature out I just send it to Steam and they put it up within a couple of hours. They don't get in the way at all, unlike some of the console publishers." **PCZ**

ARABIAN KNIGHTS...

# PRINCE OF PERSIA

Our favourite Iranian adventurer gets a sexy new sidekick. *Jamie Sefton* is not that sidekick...

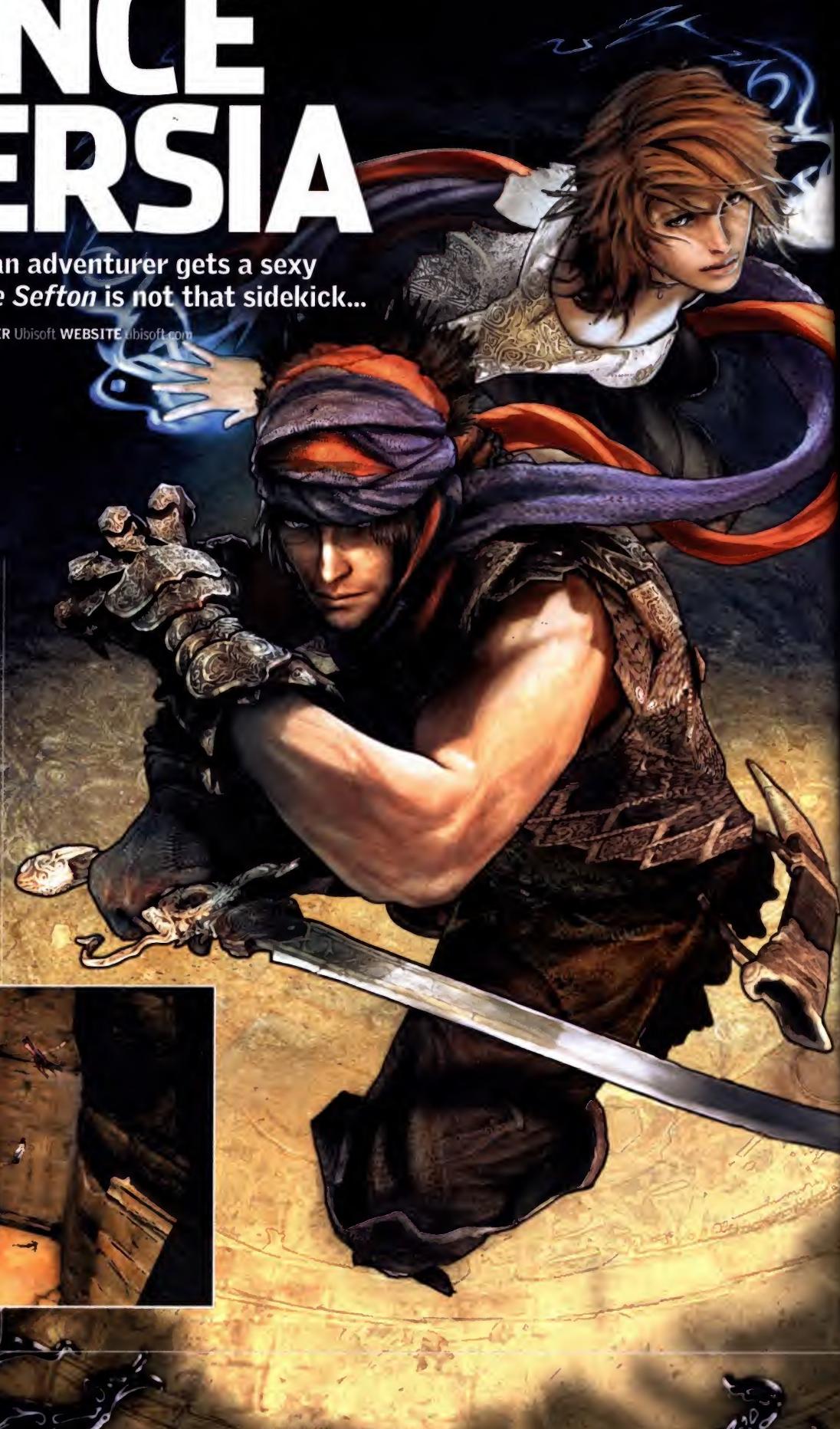
DEVELOPER Ubisoft Montreal PUBLISHER Ubisoft WEBSITE [ubisoft.com](http://ubisoft.com)

ETA  
**WINTER  
2008**

**THE LOWDOWN**

- Brand-new POP adventure
- Huge mythical Persian world to explore
- New AI companion
- Lethal gauntlet weapon/tool
- Will Ubisoft Montreal learn from *Assassin's Creed*?

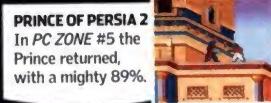
Who the hell designs these places?



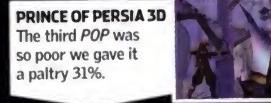
**THE STORY SO FAR...  
PRINCE OF PERSIA**



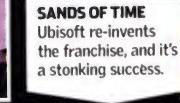
1989



1993



1999



2003



Wait for me, I've got my silly shoes on.



I'd like to comb your swirly blue eyebrows.

**P**RINCE OF PERSIA has come a long way from Jordan Mechner's 1989 smoothly-animated platformer which usually ended up with the poor Arabian adventurer impaled on spikes.

After the successful *Sands of Time* trilogy put the magic back in the Prince's carpet a few years back, Ubisoft is again reinventing *POP* with a brand new graphics style (see Hard Cel box out), setting, enemies and a fresh hero – and this time, he has a sidekick. Again.

The new *Prince of Persia* begins with an ancient tale of two warring gods, one of whom – Ahriman – goes on an evil bender, spreading nastiness throughout the world in the form of a gloopy black substance called the Corruption. The bad god's brother Ormazd manages to defeat Ahriman's goons, the Corrupted, and also imprisons his evil sibling in a sapling called the Tree of Life. Ormazd then entrusts the care of this woody prison to a race of people called the Ahuras, and for thousands of years the world sleeps safe in its giant space bed, until Ahriman begins to plan his escape.

"I don't think we necessarily reached the limit of what we could do with the previous games' storyline, but that plot seemed like a whole – it was about the

Sands of Time, where they came from and how they were destroyed," says creative director, Jean-Christophe Guyot. "Prince of Persia is a universe with many branches inspired by *Arabian Nights*, and in that you have lots of different tales. We felt this was a good opportunity to start over and have a new story arc and new characters."

#### NODE FUTURE

The new Prince is a wanderer, dressed in ragged clothing, torn from years of battles, but the luxurious material wrapped around his neck hints at a more regal past. Ubisoft Montreal are creating a beautiful mythical Persia for the hero to explore, built from the *Assassin's Creed* engine – but does this mean the game is turning its back on previous *Prince of Persia* titles to become a more open-world gaming experience?

"I think we have to be careful how we qualify the world – it's open-ended, but it's not a sandbox or free-roaming game," asserts Guyot. "The previous *POP* games were very linear in their structure, so we're trying to change that a little bit and give some freedom to the player. But our structure is more like a network, so you have nodes you can reach and in-between the nodes are lines of gameplay

## "Ubisoft is making a beautiful mythical Persia for the hero to explore"



that connect them. You have a choice of going to whatever node you want, but we're deliberately keeping the rhythm and pacing of the previous *POPs*.

As the Corruption begins to swamp the world when Ahriman is unleashed, parts of the game will be off-limits, while others will be changed and invaded by the terrifying minions of the bad god – which is somewhat reminiscent of the structure in Nintendo's *Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess*.

"At the beginning the world is open, so you start with every node you want," continues Guyot. "However, the Corruption and the various traps that the Prince has to overcome, are things

that enable us to dynamically manage your journey through the game and make Ahriman react to your progress, so the world will evolve as you move on."

#### WOMAN TROUBLE

As well as a new set of acrobatic moves that will help the Prince negotiate the large environments and city streets, a lethal-looking metal gauntlet has been clamped to his left hand that can be used to slide down sheer cliffs and walls to access hard-to-reach areas.

"The gauntlet adds a different dimension to the gameplay. We wanted a more acrobatic style so this makes it a bit more credible, as it explains his ability to do some of the moves such as the wall-runs," continues Guyot. The metal glove can also be used in combat to lift enemies into the air and slam them down onto the ground, as well as a few other nifty moves yet to be revealed. "We're exaggerating the moves seen in the previous *Prince of Persia* games. You can run

## Prince of Persia: The Movie

PC ZONE got there first in 2004...

Back in the midst of the sands of time, PC ZONE ran one of our truly hilarious back pages with a fake promotional poster for the movie *Fresh Prince Of Persia*, starring Will Smith – a brilliant, and startlingly satirical swipe at both videogame licensing and the Hollywood system that sent shockwaves through both industries. Or rather it didn't.

Four years later and the *Prince of Persia* movie is being made with Mike Newell (*Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*) directing, Jerry Bruckheimer (*Pirates of the Caribbean*) producing, and Jake Gyllenhaal (*Donnie Darko*) as the Prince. We still think ours would've been better...



Fresh!



Cartoon Khartoum. Ish.



Elika: created by photocopying Natalie Portman's face.



Open areas make for some breath-taking views.

around in the city easily, but we wanted more platform action, so you'll be controlling every jump, unlike the system in *Assassin's Creed*."

However, the biggest change in combat, and the game itself, is the addition of a female companion – Elika. A descendent of the Ahuras (the tree people, remember) and blessed with magical abilities, Elika is a constant sidekick for the Prince, a tool for the player to interact with during acrobatics, combat and puzzle-solving.

"Elika is semi-automated – she'll do her own thing, but you can also control her using one button, which is contextual, so for example in combat, she will

"The goal is for her to be a function for the player, as well as enhance the relationship and tell the story. We didn't want to have too much of us just telling you the plot through watching cutscenes, so having this character with you all the time is a good way of providing stuff like backstory without stopping the action."

## FIGHTING TALK

The focus for the combat in the new *POP* is on duels, rather than melees involving half-a-dozen foes wading into the action, as the development team want each fight to be significant.

"It allows us to get closer to the fighters, get the camera right in there so

## "The focus for the combat in the new *POP* is on duels, rather than melee"

perform attacks, doing a combo with you," says Guyot.

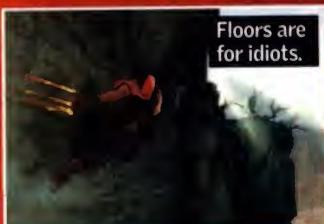
Ubisoft want to build the relationship between you and Elika, who has been inspired by such strong female roles as, erm, Queen Amidala from the *Star Wars* prequels and, um, Elizabeth Swann from *Pirates of the Caribbean*. Go feminism!

we can see their emotions and create more dramatic moments," an animated Guyot explains. "We also wanted the Prince to be a more rogueish type, a wanderer like Sinbad for example, so killing 10,000 enemies on-screen with huge combos works when you're a barbarian, but it doesn't feel right for an adventurer. The Prince knows how to fight, but we want him to feel human."

In battles you have the freedom to perform certain actions – you can use your sword, your glove, acrobatics or



One-on-one battles mean more tactical, intense fights.



Elika – and you can also use the environment to smash enemies up against walls and other equally vicious moves. Each of the enemies you'll encounter have varying special magical attacks, but they'll all have the same basic global fighting system, so if they do a grab for example, you have to quickly perform a counter-grab, or they'll hurl you violently through the air. Different monsters require the Prince to use different abilities, but new moves and other tricks will be unlocked as you progress, which will be essential if you don't want to end up being a corrupted pile of Ali Baba.

Ubisoft have taken away with one hand (*Splinter Cell: Conviction* has been delayed until next year) but given with the gauntlet-enhanced other – and most surprisingly, the new *Prince of Persia* is

already being lined up for a Christmas launch. The new setting, central hero, special moves and weapons, and gorgeous graphical style with smooth hand-drawn animation, are all brave departures for the series that previously intoxicated gamers with its smart chasm-leaping gameplay.

While the full name of the game is still under wraps, *Prince of Persia* is definitely full of eastern promise. **PCZ**



## Hard Cel

*Prince of Persia's* new look explained...

When we asked creative director Jean-Christophe Guyot about the stunning cel-shaded look of his new *Prince of Persia* game he laughed.

"Actually, cel-shading isn't what we're aiming for! We were looking for something closer to our illustrations detailed with lots of textures. Much of the inspiration for our art style was Orientalism, and our artist used that a lot."

So why did he feel the need to change the appearance of the next *POP*? "We used all of our talented art guys to influence the look of the previous games, but never to the point that we wanted to. This time we were able to use all the latest technology to get closer to the drawings, which also supports the *Arabian Nights* storybook feeling."



Like nails on a blackboard...

# Take your PC gaming to the next level

Windows Vista brings a whole host of next-generation features to the discerning PC gamer. Here are just a few that you need to know about



Windows Vista is the brand new version of Windows. Not only does it offer huge improvements in security, usability and appearance over Windows XP, but it's primed to meet all the demands that 3D games will be throwing at it.

It all revolves around DirectX 10, the new interface that games programmers are going to be using to push the boundaries of 3D games. DirectX 10 brings with it incredible new levels of detail and the ability to have more complex objects moving around in each scene. The result is stunning and offers a much more cinematic experience. Want to see what we're talking about? Just take a look at the in-game footage

of Crysis at [www.crysis-online.com](http://www.crysis-online.com). You'll be blown away.

There are other improvements, too. Windows Vista also introduces a new Games Explorer, which will make all your games accessible from a single location. And if you share your PC with your kids, you'll be happy to know that there are built-in parental controls to prevent them playing games unsuitable for their ages. Also, if you own an Xbox 360, it's good to know that its wireless controllers will work with Windows Vista as well.

So, if you want to stay current with your PC gaming, then Windows Vista is the way to go. Oh, and those massive improvements in PC security, usability and appearance? Don't worry, they're all thrown in for free. 

## Is my PC up to running Windows Vista?

Don't panic, there's every chance your PC will run Windows Vista without upgrades, especially if it's capable of playing the latest 3D games. But all PCs are not created equal, and to ensure that you get the best gaming experience, only PCs that are worthy can upgrade to Windows Vista.

It's easy to find out if your PC meets the requirements – simply download the free Windows Vista Upgrade Advisor from [www.microsoft.com/windowsvista/getready](http://www.microsoft.com/windowsvista/getready). Run it on your PC and you'll get the definitive verdict on whether your computer is up to running Windows Vista.

Windows Vista gives each PC a Windows Experience rating that tells you at a glance how powerful

your processor, graphics card, memory and hard drive are, with a single combined score. The higher the number it comes up with, up to a current maximum of 5.9, the better your PC will be able to run Windows Vista and whatever games you want to play on it.



**RATE YOUR PC** Get an at-a-glance rating of how well your PC will run Windows Vista



## Super Media Center

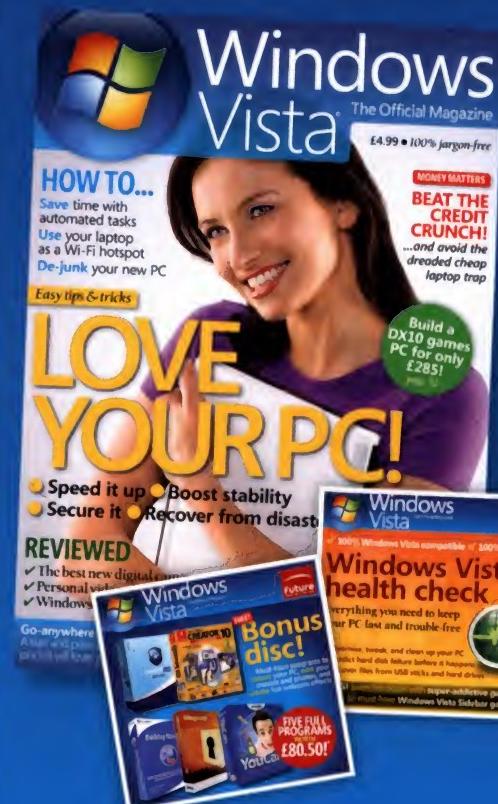
Windows Media Center is at the heart of the Ultimate and Home Premium editions of Windows Vista. Connect up your PC to an HDTV and browse your music and video collection. What's more, you can bin your set-top DVD recorder! With Media Center and a TV tuner card in your PC, you can play, record and timeshift TV programmes. Get hold of Windows Media Center Extender (a device that plugs into your TV) and you can stream your media from a PC anywhere in your house. If you own an Xbox 360, this Extender capability is already built into it.

# Get more from your PC with Windows Vista: The Official Magazine

If you want to get the very best from your Windows Vista PC then pick up a copy of *Windows Vista Magazine*, which tells you everything you need to know

We show you...

- How to speed up your PC
- How to fix common problems
- How to boost stability
- The best new kit to buy for your PC
- Great new games and software



## Issue 19 is out now

Find out more at  
[www.windowsvistamagazine.co.uk](http://www.windowsvistamagazine.co.uk)

### All your games

All your games are now stored in one handy location. Install a Windows Vista game, and its icon will appear here.

### Game rating

All games designed to be played on Windows Vista are rated, so you can see if your system will be up to playing them. You can also stop the kids from playing ultra-gory games that have adult age ratings.

### New built-in games

Old classics, such as Minesweeper and Solitaire, have been improved and updated with Windows Vista, plus there are a few additions, such as Purple Place and Mahjong Titans.



EASY LISTING Intuitive menus help you to browse through your music collection

LET'S GET PACIFIC

# CALL OF DUTY

## WORLD AT WAR

Emerging from a pile of leaves gun-in-hand, a grim-faced Ed Zitron launches into one of the bloodiest war games to date...

DEVELOPER Treyarch PUBLISHER Activision WEBSITE [callofduty.com](http://callofduty.com)

**L**IKE STAR TREK films we've come to expect the *Call of Duty* games (if you take into account the ones released on consoles) to run one good, one bad. However, now that former provenors of console-fare Treyarch have sat me down in front of the game, I've removed my cynicism goggles to look upon the series with fresh, blood-splattered eyes.

Dropping the number system, *Call of Duty: World at War* is a new start for the COD 3 developers – having been granted a lot more time to make the damn thing, and specialising on parts of the war not instantly recognisable to your average gamer – stuff like the Russian push on Berlin or, as I was recently shown, the conflict in the Pacific.

The raid of Makin Island, one of the first levels, starts with you tied to a chair, faced with a smug Japanese general. He puffs cigar smoke in your face, before turning to one of your comrades and shouting appropriately phrased Japanese at him. All standard fare until he takes that cigar and stubs it in your mate's eye, the blood-curdling scream making even fellow enemies squirm, before they move into full-blown shock when he slits your comrade's throat, spattering blood across the wall and the dead man's shadow. As the general grabs you by the hair and

readies to kill you, there's shouting, footsteps and a knife in your captor's back. A marine pulls you to your feet, assures you you're safe and shoves a gun into your hand, asking if you can fight. As there isn't a "bugger this" option, you're well on your way into the most brutal portrayal of war you've ever seen.

### THE OTHER WAR

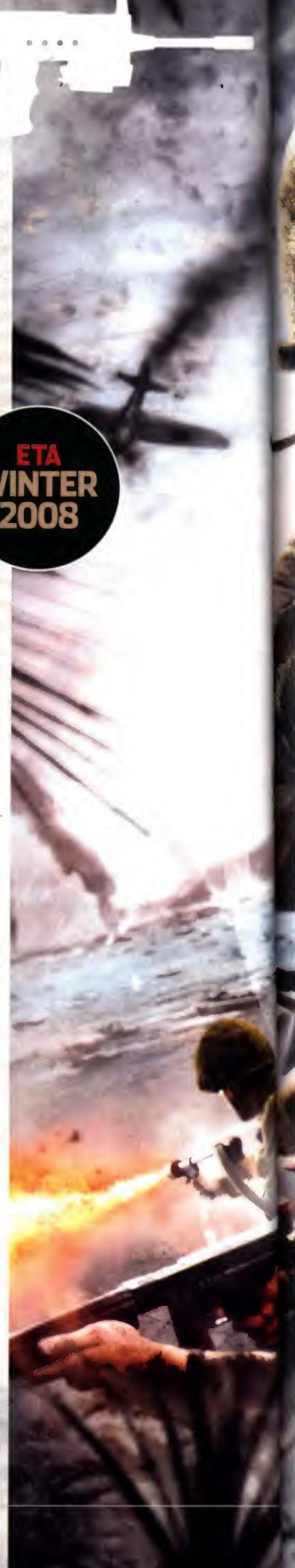
"We didn't want to make another World War II game. We wanted to make something new, something different," smiles Mark Lamia, Treyarch studio head. "We knew with this *Call of Duty* that people didn't want to play the same WWII game, and we didn't want to make it – and we haven't."

The console skid-mark *Medal Of Honor: Rising Sun* and bog-standard FPS *MOH: Pacific Assault* portrayed this side of WWII as a rather linear journey against some angry-looking Asians on a glorious summer holiday, but WAW continues COD's tradition of action-packed gameplay rooted in historic conflict – and the reality of a situation that was blood-drenched and ugly as sin.

Both in our history lessons and in most WWII games there's a heavy focus on classical tank and infantry combat, with familiar soldiers and countryside dotting

### THE LOWDOWN

A grittier, meaner war	✓
The COD4 engine is back	✓
Refined multiplayer – with vehicles!	✓
Action-packed and cinematic storytelling	✓
World War II, again	✗







One of many moments in which it's quiet. Too quiet.



Danger: often behind foliage.



This is a Pacific stand-off, not Mexican.

a stretch of countryside. Here, we see a rich, pine-laden Pacific and a different war, thanks to the unconventional style of warfare used by the Japanese. While the banzai tactic of running, swords drawn, into the enemy is well-known, the Japanese fought in a brutal, mano a mano fashion. The Bushido code, which valued honour over life, drove Japanese soldiers to fight to their last breath, no matter how dire and hopeless the situation was. To put it in Lamia's words, "They were taking no quarter, and none was given."

"COD has always been about authentic and cinematic battles," he continues, "and as we learned about this enemy, we knew we had to change the game we were making. The Imperial Japanese weren't like any modern fighting force you've ever seen. They were a gritty, ruthless, non-traditional

opponent – stuff like guerrilla warfare and the Bushido code were completely alien to the Americans at the time."

Japanese soldiers would hide in undergrowth and slit the throats of sleeping soldiers and snipe from trees, using every trick they could to bewilder the allies. I later witness this in-game, near the end of the Makin Raid, as we trundle past a seemingly benign set of bushes. Flashlights suddenly blind us and a bunch of manic Japanese soldiers leap from the foliage. One primes a grenade and grabs a soldier in a suicidal embrace, winning a grim victory.

*World at War's* stated aim is to move away from convention, removing the stodge from a tired genre with new vistas, under-exposed theatres of war, and a new angle on storytelling. As such, London-based video maestros Spov, best-known for their excellent mission

briefings from COD4, have returned to the franchise to create WAW's campaign FMVs. They go beyond the simple briefing format with amazing combinations of slick graphics and facts about the mission you're sent on.

The Makin Raid mission is pre-empted by giant floating ribbons, an introduction to Emperor Hirohito and a visual representation of Japan's invasion of Asia, with historic footage mixed in for good measure. It's a fascinating mix of Bond-style credits and stock footage, that gives meaning to the action as well as the necessary pep and excitement.

## EXTRA TIME

Treyarch have had two years to create WAW, and Lamia is proud to say they've used it well: "We've created something that's a great deal edgier, and with that edge the whole thing feels different."



Shoot every tree you see.



Damn, ambush!

## THE STORY SO FAR... TREYARCH

**En-Trey**  
Treyarch is founded by Peter Akemann and Dogan Kosi.

**Company Consumed**  
Activision gobble up Treyarch; makes *Kelly Slater's Pro Surfer*.

**Think About It**  
Gray Matter, makers of *CoD2: Big Red One*, merge with Treyarch.

1996

2001

2005

2006



**Console bores**  
Treyarch release console-only yawn-'em-up *Call of Duty 3*.



Action Man: the biggest celebrity conscript since Elvis.



## "World at War does away with the stodge of a tired genre with new vistas and a different theatre of war"

WAW will feel nothing like any other WWII game you've ever played."

And behind the optimistic waffle, he could be right – while we're used to slow-paced crawls that eventually lead to hiding in ruined houses and bunkers, with the occasional tank thrown in, the Makin Raid appears to be pulse-pounding, erratic and wildly disorienting. Enemies seem to come from everywhere and nowhere, sneaking through undergrowth before charging at you, or hiding in seemingly cleared areas, waiting for you to pass by.

"We've found, thanks to the AI, that testers are naturally using the tactics soldiers worked with," interjects Noah Heller, the game's senior producer. "Like throwing grenades into empty bunkers just in case there's a soldier waiting to jump you at the next opportunity. It's all pretty amazing."

### FOUR MAN ARMY

New to the series is the four-player co-op mode, allowing you and your friends to waltz through WAW's conflicts, dropping in and out at the beginning of levels.

I am given a demonstration of just how effective this is when the action skips to covering an encounter with a huge armoured division on some exotic-looking farmland. With two players on

hand, one takes on the tank battalions by ducking into foxholes and launching barrages of rockets, then by going hell-for-leather and leaping on top of them, dropping a grenade casually into the metal beasts before scarpering.

Meanwhile the other player covers him and handles the infantry, at one point using a flamethrower (see Flame On! box out) to set fire to a huge field of corn, scorching several ghillie-suited Japanese soldiers and grimacing at their pained screams. The blowtorch certainly has a *Return to Castle Wolfenstein* feel (understandable, as many of the staff from Gray Matter – RTCW's developer – are now working at Treyarch), but now has more practical uses in its ability to set fire to trees and any hidden snipers, as well as spreading between soldiers that are touching or are too close to each other.

Moving on from the farmland, the pair hurry up a hill and face a group of soldiers holed up in a building, using a handheld mortar to flush them out. Said building, being of a destructible ilk, is shattered, and the explosion throws two worried-looking Japanese soldiers arse-over-tit accompanied by a pile of physics-enabled rubble. Not a pleasant end.

No time for a breather though as seconds later a low-flying plane screams

through player two's vision, snapping power cables and crashing in a wall of flames that engulfs a passing tank. You couldn't imagine a scene that sings from the COD hymn sheet with as much gusto.

### DIZZYING HEIGHTS

These days it's become corny to even say that WWII is a road that has been heavily-trod previously – it's something that everyone says and everyone thinks. However, the COD4 engine, along with the new environment, has led Treyarch to believe they are creating a genuinely exhilarating experience out of source material thought long-since bled dry.

"My hope is that players reading about this will realise that you're not going back to WWII – you haven't been here before. That's how we're making this game. It's a realistic, true-to-events game that we're taking in a direction that no-one's ever seen," grins Lamia.

Heller steps away from the controls and nods. "When we chose the name 'World at War,' we wanted to make it clear that this was WWII and that we were going to re-establish the genre much like COD4 did. Infinity Ward set a high bar, and we're going to set the same bar for WWII gaming."

### Keepin' It Real

Treyarch's reasoning behind taking on the War in the Pacific

Gruff, friendly and hands-on, military advisor Hank Keirsey has worked with Activision, Infinity Ward and Treyarch since early on in the development of the first *Call of Duty*. Now he's putting a great deal of effort into helping Treyarch make WAW convincing.

"This is a story that needs to be told. The enemy we faced in the Pacific Theatre was a much different folk. Even the most fervent Wehrmacht general would surrender under enough pressure, but the Japanese wouldn't, because of the Bushido code. What you have here is a relentless imperial Japanese army. They'd pull themselves from little holes and bunkers – you see a tenacity and viciousness you didn't see anywhere else in World War II," he explains.

Keirsey has spent a large amount of time critiquing WAW, entering design sessions and going hog-wild with his criticism. He likes to take a very pragmatic approach, partnering up with Creative Lead Rich Farrelly (who was in the Canadian army) to make WAW as realistic and historically accurate as is possible.



Damn, bloom!



Something of an *Apocalypse Now* moment...



The Reichstag, just before you roll into it.



RTCW veterans make flames cool again...

## Flame On!

Fire, the war and you...

*Call of Duty: World at War* gives players the ability to play with fire, equipping soldiers with flamethrowers, flame tanks and Molotov cocktails to burn combustible materials.

While this seems like a gimmicky addition, it's historically justified. During the Pacific Campaign American troops would burn out the inside of a bunker using a flamethrower, then blow the hole shut with satchel charges to trap any surviving soldiers inside.

In WAW fire will burn through fields and ignite trees (and any snipers hidden in them), and will spread along burnable terrain, creating an inhospitable barrier in both single and multiplayer games.



Shacks! My only weakness.

Ohh, burn!



A few seconds later this man's throat is slit.

Another help is that they're using the multiplayer from *Call of Duty 4*, right down to the matchmaking and the excellent levelling-up system that makes playing *COD4* online so engrossing. *WAW* also has a new attachments system, allowing guns to be realistically modified (eg bipods can be connected to machine guns, letting you to lean the gun on a wall to make an accurate turret).

Players will also have dedicated vehicle-based games, including some in specially made vehicle-only combat zones. Treyarch are promising great things, but they're keeping schtum about them for now. Rumour is that you'll be able to use the LVT – an amphibious transport vehicle – to sneak up on people from the water.

## FRIEND ZONE

Multiplayer-wise PC gamers will be treated to 32-player free-for-all battles (much larger than on *World at War's* console versions). That means, with the promised dedication to mappers and modders, we can expect some epic combat scenarios. Also new to the multiplayer is the cross-map squad feature. Rather than just letting players stick together, you can now have built-in squad benefits – we predict better accuracy will be one example – that

work across the team. These are still a work-in-progress, but promise to reward players for sticking together through Team Deathmatch, Capture the Flag, Vehicle Deathmatch and other returning modes. They may also lead to some interesting clan-based scenarios, with particular load-outs leading to monumental clashes.

## DUTY CALLS

The maps have all been forged using readily available tools and have been tested and tweaked since development began, allowing Treyarch time to create convincing line battles, fast-paced fights (so that you're no more than five seconds from a fight at any given point) and some individual and interesting maps for the multiplayer modes.

I watched a game played by a group of testers. The play was every inch as action-packed as a *COD4* game, with one player shooting through a hut wall and leaping through the hole to escape a grenade, while others joined in a pitched battle that appeared far more fast-paced than earlier WWII notches on the *Call of Duty* bedpost.

It isn't all Pacific either, Treyarch are still to reveal the European campaign – the Road to Berlin – where you are part of the Russian advance. This part of the

war, previously only covered in depth by strategy titles, saw embittered Russian forces pushing the Nazi forces back into their home country and on to Berlin. Here the Third Reich's army fought a street-by-street battle to slow down the Red Army's advance, in a bid to give civilians a chance to escape the brutal vengeance of the Soviets.

I went into Treyarch's offices cynical, and came out cautiously excited. *Call of Duty: World at War* looks truly different. While it's still a World War II FPS, it has new enemies that react differently and, as Treyarch and their war researchers repeatedly say, entirely different battles. Sure, we've been burnt by this sort of thing before with the mediocrity of *Medal of Honor: Pacific Assault*, but even in EA's botched effort there were moments in which the variety, spectacle and terrifying 'trees have eyes' tension as you snuck through the undergrowth, gave us something new.

What is remarkable is that despite the preponderance of action games set in World War II, the bits we're all-too familiar with remain the thin-end of a particularly horrifying global wedge. The day people truly run out of things to say about the conflict, or ways to portray it, will be the day that it's revealed that historians haven't been working hard enough. Say "It's not Infinity Ward!" all you want, but let down some of your defences as *Call of Duty: World at War* could be massive. 

## Plane Sailing

Take to the skies with *World at War's* seaborne mission...

As well as being fought on land, the Pacific Conflict involved a fair few naval sorties. In *World at War* you take part in a rescue mission, sitting inside the turrets of a PBY Catalina – a huge flying boat that can not only rain hell from the skies, but level on sea, making it not only a versatile weapon but a bloody good premise for a roller-coaster gun-ride.

You take part initially in a sweep, blowing gigantic holes in the Japanese carriers and destroyers, while taking out the searchlights that direct the flak cannons and smaller boats trying to bring you down. Once the sweep is completed, the plane lands and you must balance repelling incoming Japanese forces and dragging injured soldiers inside the plane.

Treyarch have actually mapped out a real Catalina seaplane, creating an impressive-to-scale frame to accurately motion capture soldiers moving through the hull of the ship between the guns. Treyarch even plan to take to the air in one themselves for research purposes, a plan slightly encumbered by the fact that flight-worthy 50-year-old planes are thin on the ground.



**"World at War is turning out to be a brutal and realistic game"**

ETA  
WINTER  
2008

## METAL VS DEATH

# PROJECT ORIGIN

### THE LOWDOWN

The real <i>F.E.A.R.</i> is back	✓
Alma has grown up	✓
Unexpected mech combat works	✓
Not a slave to the original	✓
Will it be scary?	✗

**Jon 'Log' Blyth tries to remember the bit in *F.E.A.R.* when you take a rocket to the face and snigger**

DEVELOPER Monolith PUBLISHER Warner Bros. WEBSITE [projectorigincommunity.com](http://projectorigincommunity.com) PREVIOUSLY IN... 189

**T**HE DEMONSTRATION CODE that I'm about to watch John Mulkey - *Project Origin's* lead designer - play through isn't optimised, so the loading times are longer than usual. This gives me a chance to write down the chapter synopsis verbatim. "Dr Ambrose has revealed that Aristide's plan will result in an exponential increase in Alma's destructive energy. Aristide has rejected the data and is intent on proceeding as planned."

I don't know what Aristide's plan is, just that she's the president of Armacham Technology Corporation and responsible for most of the deaths in the original *F.E.A.R.*. But, I've seen enough movies to know that when a money-motivated suit rejects a scientist's worst-case scenario, you'll get a thrilling, worst-case scenario climax. And a smug scientist.

### ALMA MATTERS

The strange corporate hydra that is Vivendi-Blizzard-Activision may still own the



Come downstairs, your dinner's ready. Your dinner of bullets!

*F.E.A.R.* franchise in name, but in a presumed moment of stupidity they forgot to ask for the iconic star of the show, Alma. They managed to release two expansions that did feature her, and took the less-lauded components of *F.E.A.R.* - the repetitive grey corridors and enemies - and created levels so void of opportunities for your enemies to flex their tactical intellect, that they looked stupider than they were. That's the last I'll talk of *Extraction Point* and *Perseus Mandate* - Monolith are certainly ignoring them.

Smoking: bad for a buildings health.

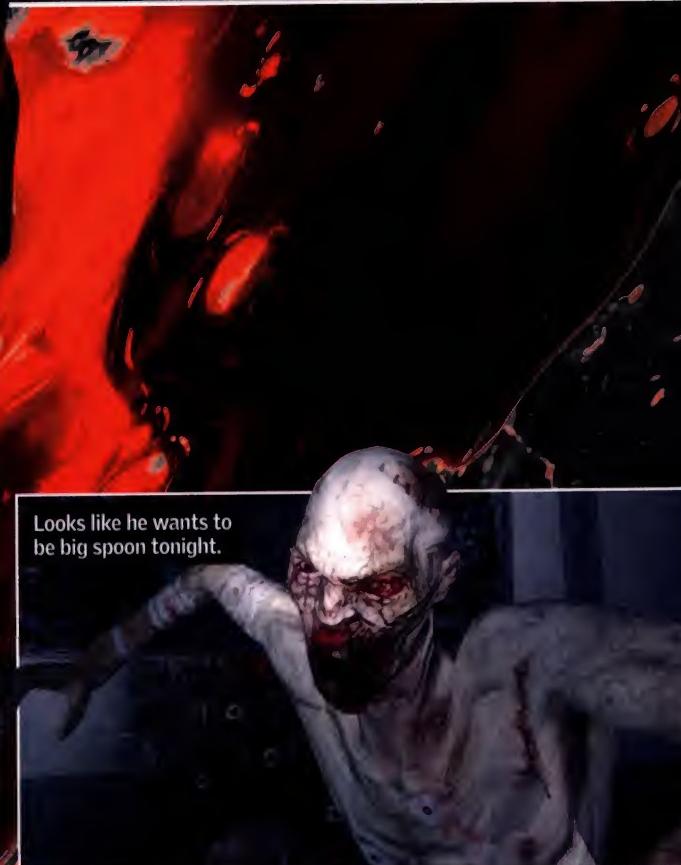
The events of *Project Origin* promise to bring the player closer - physically and psychologically - to Alma than the flittering twitches of first game allowed.

Your team has been despatched to retrieve Genevieve Aristide, the same data-rejecting president - who, if cast in a daytime TV drama - would be stupider than the mayor who refuses to cancel Mardi Gras, despite the warnings of a pair of plucky seismologists. John Mulkey explains further, without reference to rubbish TV.

"You play Michael Beckett," enthuses Mulkey, a man who's enthusiasm means that he's constantly smiling. "You're going in to rescue Aristide, the president of Armacham - the woman who restarted Project Origin and wakened Alma. It starts before the end of the first game, when you (as Point Man, the original game's protagonist) were headed into the containment facility and Wade released Alma and you had to destroy the facility to control her."

This means, mid-point in *Project Origin*, you'll get to witness the massive explosion that punctuated the end of *F.E.A.R.*







and get the chance to extend your war into the burning streets of a newly bombed town.

In some ways, *Project Origin* is similar to its predecessor. The guns have a similar look and the distressingly named Penetrator is back, albeit with a couple of tweaks. Mulkey explains that the gun was as popular in-house as it was with players.

"Our principle art lead's favourite thing to do was to go slow-motion, crouch under a guy, shoot him in the chin and pin him to the ceiling. Horrifying, but kinda like a piñata."

The interface has a cleaner, curvier feel to it and the numbered health and armour has been

replaced with the console standard of health regeneration. You still have the powers to slow time – although how you're able to achieve this remains unexplained, for now. An early scene showing you being operated on while Aristide looks on perhaps giving the strongest clue.

The game feels different in other ways. Monolith have engaged with their community – their "Name Your Fear" competition was the source of this game's title. Another thing that the fans wanted and are getting, are mechs.

Monolith have strong form in mech combat – 10 years ago, *Shogo: Mobile Armor Division* won a devoted following with its manga-themed mecha gunplay. *Shogo* is still played today, but would be far better remembered if it hadn't been released at the same time as *Half-Life*. So it feels like the inclusion of mechs is more

a cock-eyed tribute to the meaty metal of *Shogo* than the tense sinew we loved about *F.E.A.R.*

A large part of the code I played was this new, mechanised combat. The power feels great – the terrain that felt solid before suddenly crumbles under the miniguns and rockets of your suit. Men become ants and other mechs feel oddly tiny, making you feel more impervious than you actually are. Rockets steadily chip away at the suit's armour, and you're a sitting flesh duck when you're forced to evacuate.

As much fun as this is, it's hardly any definition of scary. Exhilarating, yes. Cool, possibly. But being the biggest bastard on the battlefield is the polar opposite of atmospheric terror. In the absence of any evidence of claustrophobic corridors and hallucinations, I had to ask Mulkey if this isn't going against the grain of what *F.E.A.R.* was about.

### FEAR IS ALL ABOUT

"*F.E.A.R.* is all about the crazy chaos of combat. It's going into this crowded room, throwing in a grenade and hitting slow-mo," he reminds me. He's right, of

Just wait until you're finally in my reticule.



Muzzle flash – a useful torch.





Red sky at night,  
massive gunfight.

course – even with the nods to Japanese horror films, *F.E.A.R.* was as much an action movie as anything else. But excellent AI aside, it's the horror and atmosphere that sticks with you, years on. Surely they'll be recreating that?

"We'll still have the tension-building elements, and all that stuff," says Mulkey, with the practised vagueness of a man who knows that he's sailing close to forbidden topics. "In the first game we introduced the vocabulary of what we were using. You had the scary little girl, it was all creepy and she'd startle you. Now we've established that, we can't really use the same tricks again."

But will Alma be developed into a more tangible threat? She's such an iconic figure that she's got to be developed somehow. "Alma will be more physical, she'll touch you more. It's going to be very personal and more up in your grill," he assures. "The first game's child manifestation was a projection of herself in her last moment of innocence. When her father imprisoned her, impregnated her and forced her to give birth to

the player and Paxton Fettel. In this game, we're going to see her at the point where she was at the end of the game, as a hag, and as a woman."

### FILM REAL

One of the levels I'm allowed to play is the first level. This works as a tutorial, as you'd expect, but it also sets the tone of the game. Monolith are no strangers to the movie sensibility – pretty much everything they've done has been directly related to, or heavily influenced by, the love of a good movie genre. So, when the death-hardened Delta Force squad I'm a part of finds a dead body – possibly the result of Point Man's adventures – it's taken with nervous humour.

"It looks like they hit his aorta," the team's aspiring doctor suggests, and is roundly mocked for this absurd diagnosis. "Argh," screams one of my friends, "They hit my aorta!"

Waiting for the lift, the atmosphere is cordial, friendly, even whimsical. So much so, that I decide to take a look at my fellow combatants close up. The models



I put it to you, sir, that you  
are no longer in one piece.



### Office inspiration

Real-world Monolith foyer just as dull as *F.E.A.R.* environments

The staff of Monolith are open about their hatred of their old, real-world office space – uninspiring, individual offices that were suited to a dour financial institution. This came across in *F.E.A.R.* – the office environment resonated with anyone who's felt the urge to hurl shit at their boss before leaping from a window. Weirdly, the foyer at Monolith's new HQ is similarly drab.

This part of the building is shared with McDonald's Seattle office, though, so some element of blandness is to be expected. Once you get to Monolith's floor, it's a new world. Posters and concept art are everywhere and the plastic bats that hung from the ceiling at Halloween weren't thrown away – they're all hanging over the desk of the guy who likes plastic bats.

This could explain why *Project Origin* feels bright and fresh – Monolith are happy.



Feeling murderous?

## It's sure Shogo

Hello, hi-tech mech



*Shogo: great for big robot fist-fights.*

The trailer quote from *Project Origin* says, "Ever since *Shogo* we've wanted to create a highly detailed and destructible environment that a mech could tear through with ease".

The response to that could go either way. First, you can say there's a time and a place for mechs and that they're not the rock that beats the scissors of a dead witch. The other response is to throw a dozen hats into the air with the complete exuberance of climbing into a metal deathbox and letting off a hot cluster of rockets.

The counter-intuitive juxtaposition of scenarios – and if I ever say that again, kill me – is offset by the fact it plays so well, but I can't wait to see how the hell it all fits together.

Now, all we have to do is get the image of an undead scissoring witch out of our heads.

are better looking and this extends to the enemies you encounter in *Project Origin*. As mentioned, the samey look of the previous game's enemies was alleviated only by the fact that they behaved so intelligently.

"On the first game, we didn't have the variety of enemies that we wanted to have. First, you'd have the guy with the face mask with one filter. Then you'd have the guy with two filters. One guy has blue armour and one guy has green. It's the reality of production that forces you to do what you can," explains Mulkey.

"So, one of the things we pushed for on this project was greater variety. Especially the idea that in character design, there's silhouette, colour and motion. So, if we can get variety in those ways, that's great. So when you fight the Armacham guys, it's not 400 guys with short-sleeved shirts and mirrorshades."

I'm so busy inspecting my teammates and pondering the models that I don't notice the lift has arrived. The banter ceases as bullets fly past me into the lift. This causes my first nervous jump, but it's more down to the fact that I was behaving like a military knob-end. The level then becomes a series of combat set pieces and tutorials, as I learn to use my new moves.

### BODY CONSCIOUS

*F.E.A.R.* made you aware of your legs – not only by looking down and seeing

The sparkier the gun, the more deadly it is.



them, but by bringing them into view with moves like the slide. There's more of that in *Project Origin*, as you vault over railings and flip tables over to provide yourself with cover. This is something the Armacham forces did in the first game, and granting the player the same power helps to make an area feel like a satisfying game of table-flipping murder chess.

The world of *F.E.A.R.* has its own noises – just as *Half-Life 2*'s health and power stations and the shout of Combine's forces are evocative to the point of bringing on a shudder, the enemy barks and instructions are similarly transporting. But while it's good to be back in the universe that shit me up all those three years ago, isn't it all a bit... bright, colourful? And aren't these offices a bit... nicer?

"We've done some changes engine-wise. *F.E.A.R.* was back when per-pixel lighting was like 'Holy cow, we've got to have that'. It made for an atmospheric game, but it was also very stark and shadowy. We loved it, but at the same time we hated it. There were times where you were fighting guys by shooting at their muzzle flash. This time we wanted to do something with more realistic lighting and softer shadows.

"That's not to say we're going to give you a bright game – it's just another tool. We're still going to throw you in the dark. There are still going to be the little-girl screams." And when he says "little girl screams", he means you, not Alma.

### TUNNEL VISION

Rumours that the game might be more open-ended have been overstated – it's



Mechs blow down walls and stomp on daisies.



Mech guns are big.  
still all about getting from A to B – the real sandbox element comes from the unscripted AI.

"We really use the notion of the environment being able to play out in many different ways. You're not going to see maybe a 10th of what it can do, because the AI is reacting to your actions. You'll find you anthropomorphise the enemies, saying – 'You bastards, I knew you were going to do that!'"

This is true of the regular levels, although I have to say that the mech levels – by their overpowered nature – feel like a superpowered slog down a corridor. These are the levels that need to prove their place in the *F.E.A.R.* universe. Fun as they are, and fan-prompted as they may be, they feel anomalous in a world where you're supposed to be worried about your sanity, rather than your miniguns overheating.

So it was reassuring to see the hospital area, populated with the already well-publicised Abominations. Half *BioShock* spider splicer and half *Silent Hill 2* mannequin, they move with much more fluidity and nauseating grace than their counterparts in Rapture, sliding up walls and launching themselves through doorways, before landing neatly on your face for a quick munch. Are there any more new enemies? The question is evaded by my hosts: there either aren't, or they're being kept for a press event closer to launch.



As my day in Monolith HQ came to a close, I was convinced that *Project Origin* has taken a few chips out of the J-Horror camp and put them into the safer bet of the action movie. After all, the Western romance with movies such as *Ring* and *The Grudge* has evaporated. John Mulkey provides the reassurance I needed: "There is this moment that is going to creep you out, it's really nasty. Craig Hubbard, the lead game designer on the original game, has been doing a lot of story stuff for us, and he came up with this idea that was so creepy that he had to go to the president of Warner Bros. and see if it would be OK to put it into the game."

He can't talk about it, which sucks, Mulkey admits. But having to ask the head of a corporation if something is too nasty to put in the game? Now that's promising. **PCZ**

## Horror's where the money is

But what happened to the playful whimsy?

Monolith may have hit the big money with dark monstrosities like *Condemned* and *F.E.A.R.*, but their past is littered with playful jewels. The stylistic adaptation of *Tron 2.0* was a joy for nerdlings of all generations, and *No-One Lives Forever* featured an exploding cat, primed by a tap to the anus. Even 1997's *Blood* was more big, dumb bloodshed than any real attempt to scare.

As horror's provided Monolith with a path to the bigtime, does that mean they've lost their sense of playfulness? "Anyone who thinks that we've left behind the days of playfulness will be surprised," says Monolith CEO, Samantha Ryan, who started off in marketing before teaching herself scripting languages and taking on a role as a producer. Does that mean we'll be seeing a revival of *ZONE* favourite, *NOLF*? The mists of professional vagueness disappear for a second – the answer is no.







ETA  
WINTER  
2008

AN ENGLISHMAN ABROAD

# CRYYSIS WARHEAD

A bigger, badder, cockney *Crysis* that will run to perfection on an average PC? "Cor blimey innit guv'nor" claims *Will Porter*

DEVELOPER Crytek PUBLISHER EA WEBSITE [www.ea.com/crysis](http://www.ea.com/crysis)

## THE LOWDOWN

Now runs on less insane machines	✓
Better gameplay, more explosions	✓
AI glitches cleared up	✓
Won't drop into linear alien bashing	✓
Can Psycho carry the game?	✗

I'D SPENT HALF-AN-hour back in the frosted glades of Korean-patrolled paradise when the Wizard of Oz's curtain was pulled back on the PC I was using. Despite the fact that I was playing *Crysis Warhead* on high settings with a smooth frame rate and barely an ounce of pop up, the guys from Crytek dropped the information that I was playing on a machine they'd bought for the Euro equivalent of £380 pounds.

You see, over the past year they've tamed the beast that is the CryEngine 2 and now I was apparently getting high settings from 2GB of RAM, an Intel Core 2 Duo E6750 processor and an NVIDIA GeForce 8800 GT video card.

Sure, it's a fairly decent rig, but aspiration-wise it's a hell of a lot more realistic for the average gamer. Crytek are dead set on taking their game away from the PC elite and turning it into the people's plaything. Viva la Revolution!

"When we started doing *Crysis*, being the tech-happy company we are, we started working with the latest and greatest in technology that we could get our hands on," explains senior game designer Bernd Diemer. "I mean we had the first DirectX 10-capable card on the planet in the office, it was fantastic, but it also caused us a lot of pain. We were trying to get our minds around this new technology and we focussed on the ultra high-end part of the spectrum, the

enthusiast part, the guys who really want the latest and greatest. This was our focus, and this is where the system specs came from, which were pretty steep at the time of release.

"Now the technology has matured a bit and we know how to use it better and how to optimise it – we've taken the high setting, which is still one of the best-looking games on the market and given it to our Budapest team with a games PC that cost about €480: we just said that was the machine it had to run on."

"What's more, we asked for whatever could be optimised down from the ultra high setting to be put into it as well."





**Flames: a key part of the Warhead experience.**

*Warhead* really isn't running on some super-secret ultra-high prototype thing."

*Crysis* was undeniably something special, but seeing as countless PC gamers dithered on playing it beyond the demo because they didn't yet own a super-powerful rig many will have missed its supreme action bubble, washing machine lobbing and maximum armour combat. In the process they will also have missed its somewhat duff final missions, occasionally confused AI and an irritating cockney geezer who went by the name of Psycho. But these are three things that Crytek are dead-set on striking from the balance. Well, almost. Two out of three isn't bad is it?

## ALRIGHT TREACLE?

For a character who cruised straight into the *PC ZONE* roll call of the most irritating game characters at a respectable number 10 (issue 191), suffice to say when this issue's cover art, featuring Psycho's mug, appeared in the office there was a stir. Still, Crytek are promising a far less apple-'n'-pear eye-rolling this time round.

"I know he's perceived as a bit of a stereotype, but we do use stereotypes as they're fun – especially for people who aren't familiar with Europe. The American market basically," admits Diemer. "But we've now, honestly, put a British guy in charge of making the character. So I hope he's not too much for your... er..." Our more delicate tastes Mr Crytek? "Yes, just that. Your more delicate sensibilities. And we also have Susan O'Connor of *BioShock* fame working on the dialogue."

Problem, hopefully, fixed then. While we're at it, those who wondered if Psycho's accent was a product of the Dick Van Dyke school of pavement art jabbering can rest easy that his voice actor actually is British too – so British

in fact that IMDb informs he's been in *Emmerdale*, *Peak Practice* and *Grange Hill*.

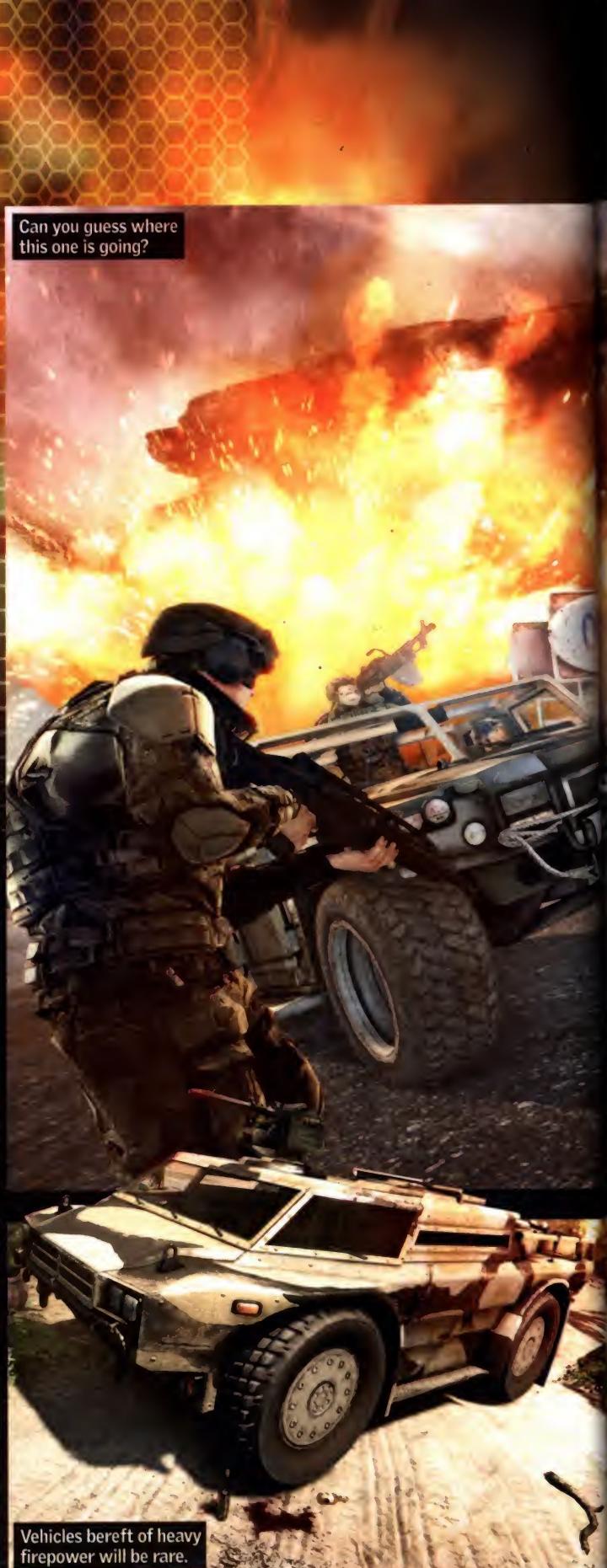
With Psycho comes a whole new fixation with all-out action: more enemies, more explosions, bigger guns and far more casually discarded rocket launchers. The cloaked stealth build-up to any assault remains sacrosanct, should you want it to be, but when everything goes wrong (as it always does) the pace of the game and the amount of flames on-screen far outstrips Nomad's more reserved outing. The parts of the island Psycho is exploring are clearly the parts marked out by the North Koreans for explosive barrel storage and parking facilities for vehicles with extra-big guns.

## 'ELLO LOVE

The game itself will cover eight hours, ending with the bit where Psycho greeted you back on the US carrier, accompanied by a captured half-dead alien craft, close to the game's ending with the line "Oi Nomad! Get a load of this ugly bastard!". Meanwhile, it begins with the moment that he was called away from the harbour assault after sniping from a crane gantry. In fact, that harbour assault – with its relentless military bombardment, encroaching dawn and complete open sandbox mentality – is very much the template for *Warhead*.

"We basically said to the design team – look at this, then make a game out of it," explains Diemer. "We wanted to improve on the pacing and in the assault mission there's a very high level of intensity at the beginning, then it gets really, really quiet, then all action again – it goes up and down."

The plan for *Warhead*, then, is to make levels tighter, more varied in the number of approaches you can take and



**Can you guess where this one is going?**



**Vehicles bereft of heavy firepower will be rare.**



**Now that's a blow-out.**

## THE STORY SO FAR... CRYTEK

**YERLI MORNING**  
Crytek is formed, and go on to impress with *Far Cry*.



**ENTER NOMAD**  
Ramped up promises make *Crysis* talk of the town.



**BUDAPEST BUY-OUT**  
The team who usually make the *Panzers* games are tapped up.



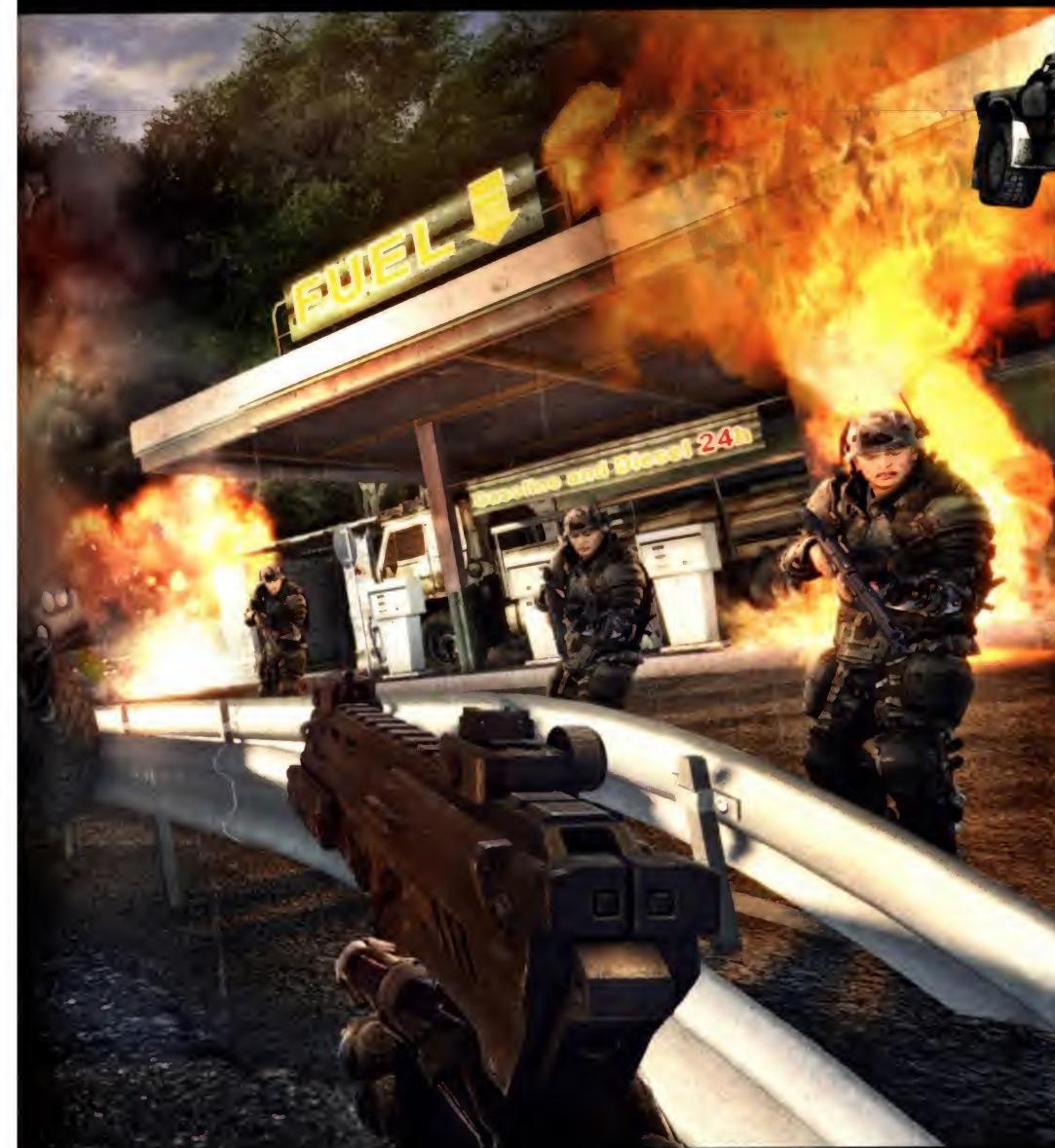
**NEW CRYTEK CREW**  
The Budapest and Kiev teams are revealed to the world.

1999

2005

2006

2007



Recently thrown tire, not pictured.

O'Neill's crash site: cor blimey.

## Retro-specing Crysis

Will *Crysis* get retro-fitted with *Warhead*'s engine?

Although currently not on the radar, I'd say that there's a strong possibility (in that when the idea was suggested to them Crytek employees nervously kicked their heels and looked in the opposite direction) that the original game will be retrofitted with the mid-range PC-friendly *Warhead* engine and then released alongside it.

"Nice idea. Of course we've thought about it," muttered Diemer in response to my suggestion, that I'll no doubt be demanding royalties for come Christmas. "It's something I'd personally like to do, I'll ask [Crytek boss] Cevat".

I might be being presumptuous, but I'm marking this one up as another remarkable divination from Mystic Will.



A less demanding *Crysis*?

to never ever lock you tight in the generic 'gun emplacement' or 'vehicle section' dynamics that *Crysis* reverted to during its *Medal of Honor: Alien Assault* closing chapters. You'll never be securely strapped into a VTOL or Humvee without the option to hop out and blow stuff up on foot instead.

The game opens with a level called Ambush – and what follows is a balls-out study of licking flame and the heady aroma of petroleum gas. The amount of military chatter in your ear has been upped considerably, there's more friendlies and enemies on screen than ever before and there's a VTOL pilot raining death from the skies, while you re-acustom yourself to which way you have to point the mouse for your various suit powers. Even better is another new arrival: fluttering in the tall grass between frozen Koreans teetering on the edges of frosty craters, there are

butterflies that you can shoot out of the air. Hoorah!

Soon enough though, the pilot is shot down and you're sent off to grab his black box recorder and kill everyone who lies between. Around this point an experienced *Crysis* player starts to see slight differences – notably in the AI.

"Some of the changes we've made are honestly really subtle," explains Diemer as I attempt to tag some distant Koreans while failing to realise that there are five approaching from the bank of trees behind me. "One of which allows the AI to react a lot more fluidly, so they hesitate less and thereby look less stupid."

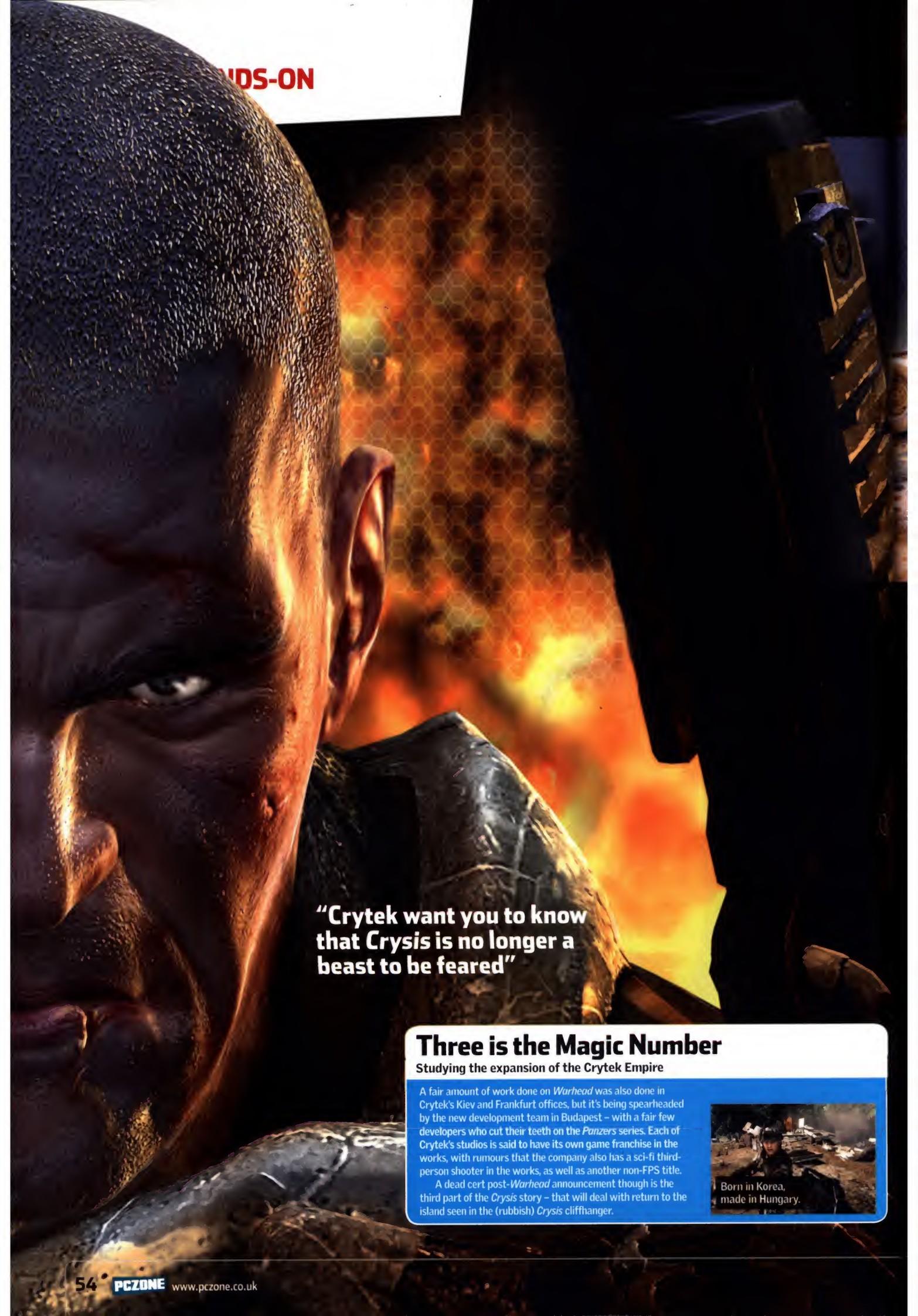
"In *Crysis* they were thinking 'Maybe I should run over there? No... over there? Or maybe I should reload?' They were bogged down by a decision tree. You know, drill sergeants tell every soldier that doing something constructive

immediately is better than working out the perfect plan too late."

Korean AI isn't the only digital brain to get a screwdriver set jabbed into it though, a major thing that Crytek know they have to get right in *Warhead* are the smarts of the aliens. Essentially they're now more like humans both in combat and in the way you approach them – being moved away from the relentless tactic-eschewing horde they once were.

"We started by making a bastard hybrid child of human and alien AI, with the group tactics that humans use – flanking, calling for reinforcements, cover fire," explains Diemer, before moving on to explain that you'll now be able to tag them from afar and plan your assault just as you do with the Koreans. But alien Hunters can't exactly smoke cigarettes, lug boxes around and casually piss





"Crytek want you to know  
that *Crysis* is no longer a  
beast to be feared"

## Three is the Magic Number

Studying the expansion of the Crytek Empire

A fair amount of work done on *Warhead* was also done in Crytek's Kiev and Frankfurt offices, but it's being spearheaded by the new development team in Budapest - with a fair few developers who cut their teeth on the *Panzers* series. Each of Crytek's studios is said to have its own game franchise in the works, with rumours that the company also has a sci-fi third-person shooter in the works, as well as another non-FPS title.

A dead cert post-*Warhead* announcement though is the third part of the *Crysis* story - that will deal with return to the island seen in the (rubbish) *Crysis* cliffhanger.



Born in Korea,  
made in Hungary.



Psycho's approach is very much of the guns akimbo 'die you bastards' variety.

## AI rumble in the jungle

*Far Cry's* focus on NPC tussles gets revisited

Something notable in its absence from *Crysis* were the AI set-tos between beast and man that made some scenes in *Far Cry* so remarkably unpredictable.

Thankfully then, scenes of alien-on-Korean combat are going to be commonplace in *Warhead* – and you'll be able to either wade on into the action or casually cloak and saunter straight past your brawling foes. What with the emphasis now on all-out action, multiple on-screen enemies and opening up the full-scale war raging around you, you can confidently expect these confrontations to be fairly epic.

Another action scene that's a definite involves "carrying around your own action bubble". This bit of Crytek-speak means marines follow you around while everything goes to hell.



Go fight each other.

### "Destruction and objects being tossed all over are the order of the day"

against trees can they? How do they act when they think they're alone?

"They're curious about their new environment. They've come out of their ship after, how many years? It's a different world they're encountering, there are these humans running around with this strange technology. When they're not fighting they're curious about what's going on, wondering what the big yellow machine over there is, or curious about buildings."

At which point, presumably, just as their questioning tendrils are poking into the inner workings of a JCB you decloak, fire off a volley, incur their wrath and get killed by a spinning metal blade to the back of your neck.

#### RICKY! BIYANKAA!

Now let's get back to the levels at hand: the downed pilot is a chap called Sean O'Neill, who knows Psycho from way back for expositional background characterisation plot purposes. There's a lot of (decent) back and forth about "Fucking hell, I knew it... Sean O'Neill!" and tales about drinking beer back in various army placements ("Lovely!") before you have to escort him through the assembled enemy throngs and their conveniently placed petrol stations.

As is the mantra in this second age of *Crysis*, the vehicle you're initially presented with as you protect O'Neill's jeep has a bloody big minigun on it – but should you choose to pick your way through the bullet hailstorm on foot you

very much can. Even if the chances of death are somewhat higher. As ever, the anything-goes mentality of the game conjures up all manner of unscripted celebration – none bettered by myself reducing a hovering helicopter to constituent parts with my rooftop armament before holding its flaming hulk in the air solely with bullet strikes and somehow knocking it straight on top of an open-backed truck containing four terrified passengers. Believe it or not said truck was even sitting next to a large cylindrical gas tank – and I went as far as punching the air when it went up in a ball of beautiful CryEngine flame.

Sooner rather than later, I find myself at a hastily constructed US landing pad on a valley ridge where I drop off my Irish-named comrade – and choose to hang around fending off an enemy encroaching from all angles, taking them down one by one before picking any enemy survivors up and power-throwing them into cliff faces – as is so often my wont. Presumably this behaviour not only earned my character the name of Psycho, but clearing the landing area would allow for airborne support in the final stages of the level – a seaside assault on a cargo-strewn base where the Korean's warhead had been stashed for my examination and retrieval. Even though, as was conveyed

to me in a series of winks, nods and how's-ya-fathers from the Crytek team, it's highly unlikely for said warhead to be of the military nuclear persuasion that Psycho is anticipating.

#### YOU PILCHARD

Every which way you look in *Warhead*, there's an exploding barrel and, system requirement downsizing aside, that's probably the primary thing you'll notice when you play it. Believe me, there's no feeling like winging a Korean with a power-thrown barrel and watching him struggling to stand back up while a casket of flammable liquid merrily smoulders a few feet away from him. Destruction and physics objects being tossed all over a sunny seaside are the order of the day – it's a simple mandate, but one that doesn't fail to entertain when placed in Crytek's more than competent hands.

Other vital changes include the menu system being coloured orange rather than green and a new suit voice that's a more sultry, feminine version that the previous two on offer. Another neat detail that'll only thrill *Crysis* obsessives, is that you'll now be able to set spring-loaded mines in the single-player campaign, should you want to surprise those tracking you with an explosion around their midriff.

Ultimately, what Crytek want you to know (are desperate for you to know, some might say) is that *Crysis* is no longer a beast to be feared. They're not saying that it'll run on a series of diodes attached to a Casio LCD watch, but it's now certainly far further within the remit (and budget) of the average PC gamer. Thing is though, that's not the most important thing. The most vital piece of information, and the one that Crytek are most tight-lipped on, are what new animals are due to inhabit the new swathe of island that Psycho will merrily dance through.

As already stated, butterflies that can be shot from the air are a definite. The 'bigger, better, more' ethos means that where there was one bird casually flying far above your head there are now 10 and where there were two crabs scuttling away from the wheels of your jeep on the seashore there are now 20. As for anything else, a glorious return of the *Far Cry* pig perhaps, Crytek are defiantly silent.

"I'm not telling yet. It's for you to discover," sternly tutts Diemer, "and it breaks my heart when people like shooting them." The petition starts now people, if we start clamouring for goats and monkeys as soon as possible then they might make it in by the time of release. Go to it! 

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# PCZONE REVIEWS

Our verdict on the latest games

## Reckless optimism

**T**HERE ARE A number of possible reactions to news of a new fantasy MMO – from the dismissive sneers of people who don't hold with that sort of thing, to the dismissive sneers of people who don't see the point, because *World of Warcraft*'s there. Then, there are the people who want *WOW*'s technical brilliance, but have tired of The Barrens and Shattrath, and want new worlds to wander.

The lead up to *Age of Conan* has been rocky. Our initial scepticism was replaced with optimism when Funcom announced a fundamental rehaul, and that optimism made it through a number of gameplay decisions that seemed geared to making the MMO more accessible to console controllers than the MMO's traditional home on the PC. The end result is way better than our fears – but with a number of issues that are bound to blight a game that tries to do its own thing in an established genre.

Hyboria will definitely attract tourists – but will anyone want to make it their new home? Read our review for boy Zitron's opinion...

Jon Blyth

Jon Blyth, reviews editor

## Must Buys!

PC ZONE Classics are hard to come by, and when you see one you should drop to the floor and refuse to move until someone buys you the game...



## PCZONE SWEARS...

## 58 AGE OF CONAN: HYBORIAN ADVENTURES

Will Robert E. Howard's world of low fantasy score high as an MMO?

### The PC ZONE Awards



**CLASSIC (90%+)**  
Games scoring in this bracket are air-punching, heart-soaring triumphs. Buy them.



**RECOMMENDED (75-89%)**  
Head-turning, if not eye-popping, games. But then, who wants their eyes popped?



**DUMP (0-19%)**  
PC ZONE's dirty protest. If a game is bad, we won't shirk our duty.

### AND THE REST



**ONLINE ONLY**  
Don't have an internet connection? Then you're wasting your time. Move along please.



**EXPANSION PACK**  
See this and you're going to have to own the original to play the expansion. We know – life's not fair.



**ON THE DVD**  
Good news! Check out the cover DVD for a playable demo or movie.

### The PC ZONE gaming machine

As you'll see on the many pages of resplendent reviews that follow, we list the minimum specifications you need to play each game in each review. Please refer to the publisher's website to check out their recommended optimum specs that'll make the games super-whizzy. We review all new games on a variety of systems, including our top-spec, very desirable Xworks X81-C2D, (pictured right). For more info on Xworks, tap into the wonder that is the Internet and type the following selection of letters into your browser: [www.xworksinteractive.com](http://www.xworksinteractive.com).



### ALSO REVIEWED

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More cutesy platform action with pop icons and plastic bricks.
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The French deliver another bout of flipping great racing in indestructible cars.
- 68 **TERRORIST TAKEDOWN 2: US NAVY SEALS**  
Welcome to cheap mediocrity.
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The Poles take on the Nazis.
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- To only review code signed off by the publishers and the developers
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- To tell you if a company refuses to send a game to us before it's on sale. There's always a reason
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- To listen to you if you think we've got something wrong. Email us at [letters@pczone.co.uk](mailto:letters@pczone.co.uk)



# AGE OF CONAN: HYBORIAN ADVENTURES



**Ed Zitron** sits down to take on the newest adaptation of Robert E. Howard's barbarian stories...

**DEVELOPER** Funcom  
**PUBLISHER** Eidos  
**WEBSITE** ageofconan.com  
**ETA** Out now  
**PRICE** £39.99  
(£8.99/month subscription)

## AT A GLANCE...

An interesting, evolutionary but generic MMO, plagued with niggling faults and an occasional lack of flair, that is still a good laugh in small doses.

**Minimum system requirements:**  
3GHz Processor, 1GB RAM (1.5GB for Vista), and a 128MB video card.

HOW IT STACKS	
WORLD OF WARCRFT	95%
EVERQUEST 2: RISE OF KUNARK	80%
AGE OF CONAN	73%

**M**AKING AN ONLINE game these days is tough, as there are few interesting settings left to force into the bizarre mould that is the MMO. Luckily for us, there's a chauvinistic lore-trove waiting in the wings: Robert E. Howard's Hyboria – the world of shirtless sword-swinging Conan the Cimmerian – which has now become the most brutal MMO in existence.

At the start of *Age of Conan* you can pick one of 12 classes, split into four different archetypes – Soldier, Priest, Rogue and Mage – of which most fall into the generic roles of tanking, melee and ranged damage, healing and spell-damage. The few exceptions to the genre standards are classes like the Herald of Xotli (a mage that morphs into deadly melee characters), The Tempest of Set (an area-of-effect healer and damage-

dealer) and the bizarre Demonologist (who must balance the damage his spells do to himself, against the awesome damage he does to opponents). While these innovations don't break the MMO format, they certainly crack it.

## PIRATE HELL

The first 20 levels have you hidden in the fully voice-acted pirate haven of Tortage. Here, you learn the basics of your chosen class through a mixture of single-player questing – your Destiny Quest storyline, which happens only at night – and the more standard MMO quests, which are accessed by manually flipping the island into daytime mode.

The single-player fare is a series of missions that take you from being a newly arrived slave to the one responsible for the overthrowing of evil-doer Strom and his Red Hand troops.

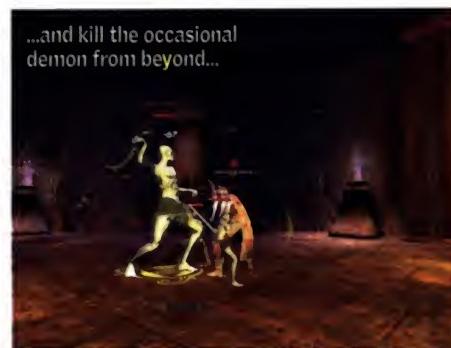
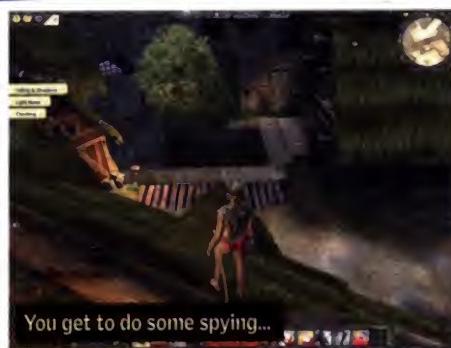
Throughout this you get introduced to the combat mechanics, the strange way in which *AOC* does conversations (see Dialogue with the barbarians box out), and some of the more engaging parts of *AOC*'s overarching story.

The Destiny Quest is an interesting and innovative way to teach you about your class, and is a joy to play thanks to the reasonably involving storyline, decent voice-acting, and the fact that you're basically playing in a solo instance – something that MMOs have needed for a fair bit of time. The single-player quests offer the potential to level your character as you would during the standard daytime quests too – meaning your midnight story adventures aren't at the expense of your character's development.

The Destiny Quest is certainly one of the most engaging parts of levelling to 20, but it doesn't



**"The Destiny Quest  
is an innovative way  
to teach you about  
your class"**



Rhinos are only rideable at level 40, sadly.

## Dialogue with the barbarians

How conversing with the conquerors feels...

One thing that *Age of Conan* does build on is the basic MMO quest. Talking to an NPC brings up a selection of options that allow you to change the flow of the conversation.

Predominantly these end with either you stopping talking to them or accepting a quest. But you can find a few interesting anomalies – such as when you interrogate some prisoners in Old Tarantia. During this mission, you have to be tactful in order to successfully finish the quest without scaring off the guilty party.

Sadly, while at first it's a cute idea, the quest dialogues become an annoyance the moment you realise that you're in an area predominantly made up of kill-this-do-that tasks, and you'll find you occasionally have to sacrifice the possibility of a hidden quest to prevent yourself having to wade through some, frankly, boring chit-chat.



completely satiate the levelling curve, which requires you to jump into daytime to reach milestones (10, 15 and 18) before going on with the next part of the nighttime yarn.

These day-based quests are standard MMO affairs, with dungeons to crawl through, massive plants to kill, and even the crypt of someone's dead wife to look into only to find out she's turned into a monster. They dissonate alongside the story-heavy solo content, replacing calls to arms with monster bashing, but overall this is a well-executed ride through the first levels of the game.

Problems arise in that not only is Tortage the only starting city in the game, it can't be skipped. Getting through this tutorial stage takes at least six hours, and on your first go you'll find you have to do most of the quests available to scratch your way up to the end of the nighttime saga.

The Destiny Quests change depending which class you're playing, but the different chains lead towards the same conclusion, and most of your time will be spent in the daytime picking up animal parts and killing tribesmen in the same few instances. Even on the first play-through, this can get repetitive.

While there's always the possibility that Funcom will allow us to skip Tortage altogether one day, perhaps introducing another city and storyline in a paid-for expansion, I'm not sure how likely that is. And preventing players having even a modicum of choice is a mite silly – even the nine year-old *EverQuest* let players begin in more than one area.

## FIGHT NIGHT

The most talked about element of *AOC* is its approach to combat. Unlike most MMOs, there are no automatic attacks, with the basic blows dealt by hitting



Farting blood is never a good sign for a warrior.



Quest Completed: Feed the baby to the snake.



hotkeys for left, overhead and right-side attacks with either melee or ranged weapons. You choose the most effective one by watching the enemy's shields (see Protect your neckbeard box out), and drawing their defences to one side, letting you cause more damage by attacking the unprotected flank. But you need to take care you don't fall victim to similar tactics.

Melee becomes complicated when you add combos (see below), which are special attack routines engaged by hitting a hotkey. This brings up a prompt-

box that tells you to press a series of left, overhead or right (and at later levels, lower-left and lower-right) strikes to unleash the combo. These are mostly par-for-the-course MMO skills and in practice can be a mixture of hilarious, visceral fun and unbelievable frustration, depending on how the user interface feels at the time.

The combo system is imperfect in that it depends on the floaty lag of a keyboard. You'll find you often break some three-button combos because there's a latency between key presses

and the game registering them. In the heat of battle you have to tap in combos slowly enough for the game to take them in, which really gets in the way of what should be a fast-paced experience.

This awkwardness isn't entirely noticeable until you get to the later levels and you have multiple combos to put together in a sequence, requiring you to play a game of *Dance Dance Revolution* with your 1, 2 and 3 keys. While this is doable – if your fingers are fast enough – it fast becomes annoying enough that you'll tend to use simpler combos.

This is a valiant attempt to reinvent the wheel – and it almost works – but the combo system needs smoothing out. And as it existed throughout most of beta, I can't be sure when that will be.

## BEYOND THE ISLAND

Once you make it to 20 though, you're bundled onto a ship and out of the loving embrace of noob-dom. Gone are the voice-acted quest givers, replaced with distressing mutes with unmoving mouths, gesticulating in place of speaking. This worrying shift to

## Combos How to cut through your average Cimmerian in four easy steps



### Find an opponent

Find someone to murder and get a handle on how they have their shields stacked. Fail to pay attention to shield placement and you won't get far in combat.



### Feint your opponent

Before you start a combo, attack on the opposite side to where the final blows will hit, as your victim will likely move their shields to block the side under assault.



### Combo your opponent

Once one side has been opened, activate the combo and tap it in using the attack keys (usually bound to 1, 2, 3, Q and E), taking care not to muff it up.



### Behead your opponent

If get a kill with a combo there's a chance you'll get a gruesome fatality, giving you a brief buff and a shower of blood, or even a decapitation.



Khem is your generic desert town. How exciting.



**"While Tortage has had love poured into it, the hub zones feel barren"**

## Protect your neckbeard

Fighting, shields, *Age of Conan* and you...

In battle, you'll find yourself having to change the direction of your attacks to adapt to where your enemy is concentrating their defences. This is represented by three shield icons – one overhead, one on the left and one on the right – that can be moved and stacked. Doing this increases protection at that spot, but leaves the others vulnerable. You can move your shields' positions by holding down CTRL and hitting an attack key. But at times *AOC* doesn't show you which direction the enemy is attacking from, which can be frustrating.

Each combo attack also has a particular direction, adding a fun tactical element to each battle where you throw off the enemy by making them pile their shields on one side, leaving the others open for an assault.

If there's anything that can be said about the combat system, it's that when it works it's genuinely more fun than we've had while grinding in years. While it's not as effective as Funcom planned, or as complex as the original combo system was, it's an improvement over the drudgery that is traditional automated attacks in MMOs.



lifelessness sadly epitomises what the rest of *AOC* turns into – a drab disappointment. While Tortage has had much love poured into it, the subsequent hub zones feel barren, the map barely helps you find your way around and quest-givers, and vendors and traders (*AOC*'s guild banks and auction houses) are placed awkwardly and sporadically.

Once you're through the first non-Tortage quests and receive the one pointing you towards the nearest grind zone, you talk to an NPC and get magically teleported to a hub full of yet more quest givers and, inevitably, peril. This is where *AOC* finishes transforming from story-based action MMO to an utterly monotonous experience. While it's not an entirely unenjoyable slog, cracks in Funcom's work begin to show.

Quests predominantly involve either collecting objects, killing 20 or so of a particular animal or bandit, or taking down a particularly nasty individual creature to receive some kind of remuneration at the end. Sure, this is much the same as *WOW* – but there's far less impetus here than in its rival grind-'em-up. Occasionally – and we're talking in the space of every five or so levels – a number of quests will point you obviously in the direction of one of *AOC*'s dungeons. These are of much the same variety as

the outdoor quests, but the change of scene and slight increase in danger make for some enjoyment, until (as the retail game stands at the time of review) something immersion-breaking decides to creep in.

For example, on two separate occasions I found myself having to smash down an object – in one case a gigantic wall – only to have the thing disappear instead of shattering dramatically. There are going to be patches that will fix some of these problems, but from what I've seen there's going to have to be a lot of work to cover the sinkholes that litter Hyboria. While a lot of people have said that this has been a very stable launch of an MMO, which is certainly true, there's a big difference between stable and polished, and I'm afraid to say that several cans of Mr Sheen are evidently missing here.

Overall, *Age of Conan* is a complete MMORPG. The lore itself, while hardly outstanding, is functional enough to fit the requirements of things to kill, places





to go, dungeons to chop your way through, and big, bad enemies to eviscerate. There are 80 levels with a curve that seems a bit tougher than *World of Warcraft's*, rewarding both solo and group play fairly equally, even at the higher levels.

There's also a fair amount of support for guilds, with the ability to build cities and eventually have supposedly gigantic siege battles – though I have to question how an engine that has frame rate drops when a few enemies get on screen can handle potential tens or even hundreds of players at once.

The player-versus-player side is also available, but this too still has great big holes in it, with no death penalties (you are resurrected in pretty much the same spot as they're killed), heavy balancing issues, and high levels of

griefing make playing on one of the PvP servers an inadvisable experience – at least until Funcom delivers some much-needed method to the madness. When you're in a balanced fight PvP combat is fun, but (much like any game in which arseholes are given free reign) higher level players love to wade into areas not built for them and stomp on newer players for giggles.

### CHECK YOURSELF

Finally, we have to touch upon how much *AOC* demands of the average PC. While (the admittedly far older) *WOW* will run on most PCs, to play *AOC* on any graphical setting above "A bit rubbish-looking" requires a dual core processor, at least 2GB of memory and a decent video card (with at least 512MB of RAM). *AOC*'s minimum specs resemble *EQII* and *Vanguard's* preposterous system requirements, striving to become "future-proof," but the game lacks payoff.

At the higher-end, *AOC* looks reasonably good but it still manages to judder on anything less powerful than Deep Blue. When you're desperately trying to pull together that last combo, you'll find yourself switching to lower settings in case your 3D card can't take it. The much-touted DirectX 10 support won't be available for a while either.

Overall, *AOC* isn't a bad game, but it has been over-hyped. Once you pass by the initially impressive first 20 levels, you find yourself stuck in the same monotony that plagues lesser titles working with less-promising lore and it only gets more repetitive and generic as you level up. Even the class feats and progression feel dull, with classes gaining too few abilities to ensure that making that extra push through the last of an area's unappetising content feels worthwhile. The Hyboria lore itself doesn't have the lustre to make a convincing world, or (more likely) hasn't been exploited well enough; no matter how many hours I ploughed into *AOC* post-Tortage, it was always hard to give a shit.

This is a genuine shame, because somewhere near the beginning *AOC* gives the feeling that it's revolutionary. However, once you pass the infant stages of the game, play becomes all too familiar, all too repetitive and all too

unpolished. I'm not saying avoid *Age of Conan* – feel free to give it a go and enjoy the early stages with your free 30 days of play. But when Funcom starts to demand £8.99 a month, *AOC* becomes harder to recommend.

Some fixing and additions would improve *Age of Conan*, but at its core it lacks the fight and soul to evolve into a truly amazing MMO. **PCZ**

## PCZONE

Graphics Lush and system-hungry

Sound Orchestral bits and singing ladies

Multiplayer It's an MMO

- An interesting hamster wheel
- Hyboria lore can be good
- S'got boobs in it
- Generic post-Tortage
- Currently unpolished

# 73

It started off so well



# LEGO INDIANA JONES: THE ORIGINAL ADVENTURES

**Dan Marshall** shrieks with girly excitement as his two favourite franchises crash head-on

**DEVELOPER** Traveller's Tales  
**PUBLISHER** Activision  
**WEBSITE** [indianajones.lego.com](http://indianajones.lego.com)  
**ETA** Out now  
**PRICE** £19.99



## AT A GLANCE...

Pared-down knockabout comedy platformer version of the three classic Indy films as told through the medium of LEGO bricks.

**Minimum system requirements:**  
1GHz processor, 256MB RAM (512MB for Vista), and a 64MB graphics card.

## HOW IT STACKS

INDIANA JONES AND THE FATE OF ATLANTIS	90%
LEGO INDIANA JONES: THE ORIGINAL ADVENTURES	80%
LEGO STAR WARS II	80%

**H**AVE YOU EVER seen a grown man openly blubbing? I have: it was me. I was at Steve's 21st birthday party, and I was knelt like a penitent man in front of the assembled PC ZONE staff. I was weeping half-drunk and incoherently demanding that it should be me that reviews LEGO *Indiana Jones* – after all, I am the most qualified of the team. I own a bone fide, as-used-in-the-films, fine leather jacket, but I can admit that *Temple of Doom* is complete shit. What better credentials could you want than that?

The PC ZONE team succumbed to my ignoble pleas, and granted me the boon of being the first to play this wonder of a game. Thankfully, the cost to my dignity was worth it.

## RAIDERS OF THE BRICK

*LEGO Indiana Jones* follows pretty much exactly in the footsteps of the much-loved LEGO Star Wars games, with Indy being followed about by one or two AI cohorts (or a second player if you know a real-life person) as he works his way through the three films, with endless bits of junk to collect and sections to revisit for the console completists and their so-called achievements.

The stories are told through flailing arms and grunts rather than dialogue and if you somehow haven't seen the films I think it's fair to say they won't really make any sense whatsoever – the scene at the start of *Last Crusade* where Donovan unveils the broken stone tablet being a particularly baffling example of mime gone wrong. But by and large the cutscenes are directed with such a passion for the source material it's hard to fault them.

Where LEGO Indy is at its most charming is where it subverts the movies: it's in tiny little comic touches and minor deviations from the storyline, and somehow it feels fresh and unexpected in those scenes you know inside out – bluffing your way into Castle Brunwald in *The Last Crusade* being a particular highlight.

Sadly, this works both ways and Traveller's Tales seem to have gone slightly over-the-top in terms of which bits of the films to re-imagine. Anyone hoping for a cutesy, brick-by-brick recreation of the iconic South-American temple from *Raiders* will be sobbing into their special edition Crystal Skull Corn Flakes – the chamber with the golden statue you're so desperate to explore in



LEGO style has been replaced by a sprawling mess of rotating floating platforms with plastic alligators underneath. Of all the bits not to re-imagine, I'd say that's number one.

Oddly, *Temple of Doom* comes out as the strongest section of game – the wide variety of locations giving it a slight edge over the other two, which are mainly just dusty. Also, there's probably a joke to be made here about the acting being less plastic than the film, or something.

## BRICKS OF DOOM

Visuals are gorgeous through-and-through, and there's real charm to the animation. Having brick people, brick vehicles and brick structures against more traditional gaming backdrops does irk, but Indy and co. bound about the place with all the enthusiasm and charisma expected of them, and the way Indy's dad runs while holding his hat is spot on. In fact all the characters are brilliantly realised and look uncannily similar to Ford et al,

**"Where LEGO Indy is at its most charming is where it subverts the movies: in its minor deviations from the storylines"**



## Punching Pat Roach

*LEGO Indy* recreates the German mechanic getting sliced up by a big rotor



### Ach, I vill beet you to a pulp!

Punching this buff bald man with knockers has no effect and his big manly fists are strong indeed.



### Ach, mien hand ist broken!

Fortunately, he's essentially a Nazi, and as such stupid. He'll think your face is this anvil and punch it.



### Ach, dummkopf frauline!

Then pop Marion into the plane and let her start indiscriminately shooting things like the useless woman she is.



### Ach, propellor!

Repeat and prepare for the unpleasant sticky ending we all know and love – with a funny LEGO twist, of course...



Warning – this game includes horse whimsy...



...scenes of sandy pursuance...



...bridge-related peril...



...and shameless crossover cameos.

despite only having a few blobs of ink for a face. As a result you play the game with a permanent slack-jawed grin as the pretty and vibrant colours arouse your eyes and your ears tingle as that classic score kicks in. The vast majority of the game is puzzle-solving and platform shenanigans, with baddies like the Nazis-in-all-but-name turning up for a scuffle

every once in a while. You can pick up furniture and brawl with it, shoot guns, or rely on your whip and fists, but there's nothing like the satisfying chime after hitting a non-Nazi in the chops with a shovel.

Sadly, combat is perpetually clunky, with all on-screen characters generally running about the place and flailing wildly until everyone breaks into tiny little bits. There's no finesse to it, despite a variety of visually exciting moves to keep it looking nice – Willie Scott's girly, wiggling outstretched arms being a classic example.

One of the game's core flaws

is that it has been designed to be played with a gamepad. If you're relying on your keyboard you're in for a headache – jumping around pressure-sensitive pads successfully or finding the right angle to push heavy objects is akin to the frustration of getting one of those flat two-by-one pieces off a six-by-two brick with your canine teeth.

Even if you've got that gamepad, *LEGO Indy* can be a smidge fiddly – it can be difficult to judge jumps properly due to perspective, which can irritate when you've got to retry a particularly lengthy section of puzzles all over again. What's more, vehicles are a proper pain in the tits to drive – except the squeaky pedal bike which is simply hilarious.

Not that any of that really matters – *LEGO Indy* features the same infinite lives setup as the *Star Wars* games, meaning plopping into red-hot lava or getting beaten up so much your head falls off never really matters. You can be as rubbish at games as you like, and you'll still be able to plod on through the story sections. To be honest it's nice to play through a game for once without the unmitigated stress of potential death perpetually looming over your shoulder.

Since gaming grew up – and set about proving it by being all about hookers and killing sprees – there's been something missing. *LEGO Indy* has the

same appeal as watching a blue hedgehog race across colourful landscapes collecting shiny things that go ding – old-school, classic, no-nonsense joy based around possibly the finest trilogy of films ever made. 

## PCZONE

Graphics Gorgeous and lovingly animated.

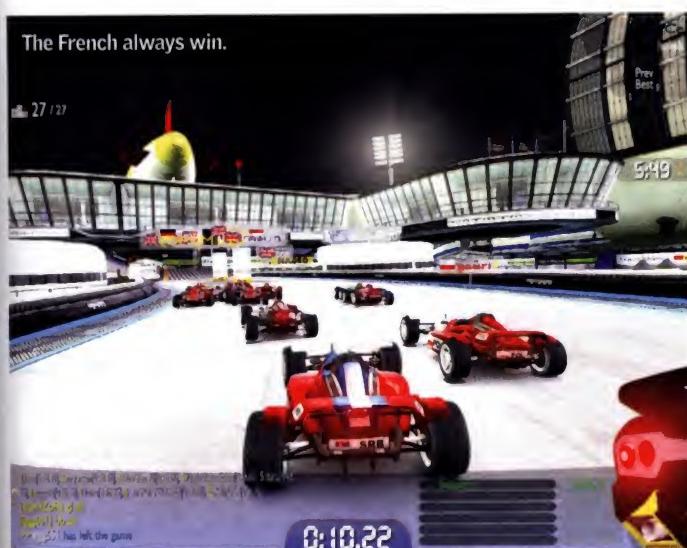
Sound Outstanding musical score.

Multiplayer Two player max, on the same PC.

- ✓ Brilliantly good fun
- ✓ Dirt cheap
- ✓ Laugh-out-loud funny
- ✗ Gameplay a tad simplistic
- ✗ It's for children really

**80**

Plastic fantastic



# TRACKMANIA UNITED FOREVER

**United forever, but nations apart – a confused  
Will Porter scratches his head. In 3D!**



## AT A GLANCE...

Full price edition of the last retail version of *Trackmania*, with an update that would otherwise be free on the internet. Confused, much?

**Minimum system requirements:**  
A sandwich toaster linked to a portable TV could run this game.

HOW IT STACKS	TRACKMANIA UNITED FOREVER	84%
	TRIALS 2: SECOND EDITION	80%
	GETTING TIMED TO RUN TO PLACES	75%

**T**HREE WAS DOUBT as to whether we should review *Trackmania United Forever*, but its naming is so alienating to anyone who's only ever had a passing interest in the gallic speed racer that a spot of review-based definition is required.

If you have *Trackmania United*, and so subscribe to the mind-bending thrills of cursor-based track laying, ramp-leaping and ghost car hurtling on offer in its solo and multiplayer races, then you don't need to buy *Trackmania United Forever*. This is a free update – in fact if you bought *United* through Steam it will have *Forever*-ified itself already. This is a brilliant deal and one that developers Nadeo should ceaselessly be praised for.

If you're not on board yet, or restrict yourself to the free *Trackmania Nations*, (also recently *Forever*-ified), then



*Trackmania United Forever* is a nifty buy from Steam or your local game emporium. This is the solid puzzling, platform-leaping and challenge-taking backbone to the seamless *Trackmania* online experience. And it also has a few extra tracks, a couple of graphical updates and a 3D mode – the latter of which is brilliant, if a little wooziness-inducing. The feelings of compulsion as you repeatedly slam the backspace key to better your times have only recently been rivalled by *Trials 2: Second Edition* (issue 195), while the way the game wraps community downloads into its interface remains impressive. My *Trackmania* love remains undimmed, even if I am routinely informed that I'm only the 250th best player in London.

But for a new player, what's the point in paying full whack for the game when you could just fish a copy of *Trackmania United* out of a bargain bin or from an online retailer and then update it for free? Come to that, isn't it cheeky for publishers Focus to hike the price back up for *Forever* when the new content contained within is available for nowt? And doesn't the fact that I've had to go to such pains to explain exactly what the damn game is, and in all likelihood

entirely failed in the attempt, suggest that outside of the *Trackmania* cognoscenti this is a bit of a marketing and communications cock up?

*Trackmania*, I love you, but there's a reason most games stick with pumping out sequels and year-tagged updates. Next time, stop this shit and just give us *Trackmania II*. (For free, maybe.) **PCZ**

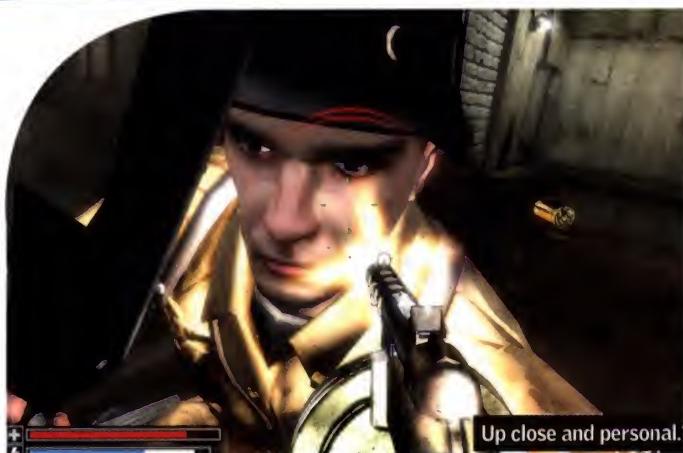
## PCZONE

Graphics Whizz-bang, thank you madam  
Sound Not lacking anything  
Multiplayer Seamless, challenging, clever

- ✓ The old *Trackmania* magic
- ✓ Still impressive online
- ✓ Impeccably addictive
- ✓ Great for existing players
- ✗ Confusing for new ones

**84**

Keep on trackin'



## CRIMES OF WAR

A new atrocity exhibition

**DEVELOPER** City Interactive

**PUBLISHER** City Interactive

**WEBSITE** [city-interactive.com/en](http://city-interactive.com/en)

**ETA** Out now

**PRICE** £9.99

**Minimum system requirements:**

2.0GHz processor, 512 MB RAM and a 128MB graphics card.

**O**UR POLISH FRIENDS at City Interactive appear intent on doing for PC games what the *Top Of The Pops* albums did for the music of the '70s (without the saucy sleeves). Essentially providing cheap cover versions of familiar genres for undiscerning tastes, *Crimes of War* is their World War II game, with sinister goings-on making it more of a tribute to *Wolfenstein* than the earnest despair of *Medal of Honor*.

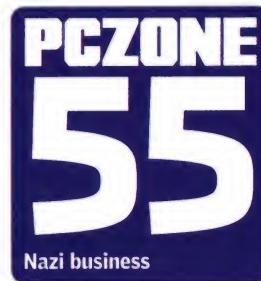
Whatever the political implications of a Polish outfit releasing a game based on Nazi atrocities, this is strong stuff, featuring some mildly disturbing images. With a story that could have been plucked from the pages of early *2000AD*, it's fanciful fare, with the nasty Nazis developing a troop of über-soldiers, of which you are one, albeit with your heart in the right place thanks to the love of a good woman.

The action is mainly straightforward gunplay, although some variety is added by such gimmicks as the Berserker



mode, in which you run around in a feral rampage slashing the throats of anyone who gets in your way. There's also a not strictly scientific 'Time Shield' whereby enemy bullets hang in mid-air instead of slicing you in two. *Crime of War's* kill-kill-pick up health-kill-kill-pick up ammo gameplay is on the frantic side and it's probably not one for the historians. All the same, it is killing Nazis...

Steve Hill



## TERRORIST TAKEDOWN 2: US NAVY SEALS

The Poles join in with the War on Terror. And do a poor job...

**DEVELOPER** City Interactive

**PUBLISHER** City Interactive

**WEBSITE** [www.terroristtakedown2game.com](http://www.terroristtakedown2game.com)

**ETA** Out now

**PRICE** £9.99

**Minimum system requirements:**

2.0GHz processor, 512MB RAM and a 128MB graphics card.



**P**OPULAR OPINION SUGGESTS that the Poles are coming over here, taking our jobs and undercutting our builders. However, at least some of them are still in Poland churning out substandard PC games for less than a tenner. *Terrorist Takedown 2* is allegedly based on the same engine as *F.E.A.R.*, but the end result is something that we would have balked at five years ago.

As for the story, it's a confusing affair that largely requires you to shoot everyone that moves, as well as everyone that stands staring into middle distance seemingly oblivious to your presence. An almost literal shooting gallery, give or take the odd lean round a corner, this is run-and-gun gameplay at its most basic, whether

clearing cave complexes, searching palaces, or escorting weirdly invincible hostages to safety. After the awful first level the game does improve marginally, despite throwing up every cliché under the sun; at one point, an exploding helicopter forces you to escape through the sewers.

All the same, *Terrorist Takedown 2* never really makes you want to stop playing, which is something of a validation of the first-person shooter genre. No matter how dated the game, as long as you're shooting bad men in the head and torso, you can't help but be slightly entertained. In fact, the only thing that makes you stop is when it comes to an abrupt halt, barely five hours after it began.

Steve Hill



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# EVERYDAY SHOOTER

Definitely not what the title suggests, says Jamie Sefton

**DEVELOPER** Quesy Games  
**PUBLISHER** Sony/Valve  
**WEBSITE** everydayshooter.com  
**ETA** Out now  
**PRICE** \$8.99 (£4.50) on Steam



## AT A GLANCE...

A clever indie shooter with great graphics, inventive levels and a soundtrack to chillaxify to.

**MINIMUM SYSTEM REQUIREMENTS:**  
 1.7GHz processor, 256MB RAM and a 64MB graphics card.

HOW IT STACKS	
GEOMETRY WARS: RETRO EVOLVED	80%
AUDIOSURF	78%
EVERYDAY SHOOTER	75%

**A**S I'M PLAYING *Everyday Shooter*, winter has finally let go its bitter grip of the British Isles and bright sunshine is streaming through my window.

Apart from the fact that my monitor screen is now too faint to see, leading me to angrily gaffer the curtains together for pitch blackness, this is the perfect chilled conditions for indie developer Jonathan Mak's mellow shoot-'em-up – it's *Geometry Wars* relaxing with a Pimm's and lemonade.

*Everyday Shooter*'s soundtrack is constructed from funky electric guitar tunes and riffs for a chilled vibe that wouldn't be out of place at Glastonbury – minus the horrifying toilets. Each level is a different song lasting three or four minutes and you move a small white dot around the screen avoiding enemies and blasting them in 360°, peppering the



soundspace with further guitar notes and riffs in sync with the music – apparently the game was influenced by the freeware games of Kenta Cho, and Tetsuya Mizuguchi's psychedelic electro-shooter *Rez*.

## GUITAR SCORE

Scoring points is achieved by causing chain reaction explosions, triggered in different ways depending on which of the eight levels you're playing, and collecting the dots left behind. For example on Lush Look Killer, you have to quickly obliterate the flashing colourful cubist constructions or glowing yellow balls to defeat the evil eyes. This sounds simple, but a major part of the game's addictive appeal is being thrown into a new level, not knowing what's going on and gradually figuring out the game's internal logic and beating it. After all your lives are extinguished, the points collected can be spent in the Unlock Extras menu for additional lives, visual effects and other goodies, which do keep you coming back.

*Everyday Shooter* has its faults – there's not as much depth as some old-school shooters, it can feel sluggish and the violently colourful visual cacophony

can sometimes mean you lose your place on the screen – but if you love videogames that look like the futuristic cloning of *Asteroids* and *Tron* made by The Designers Republic, and want a hazy guitar soundtrack you can bathe your brain in, it's certainly worth the nominal entry fee. **PCZ**

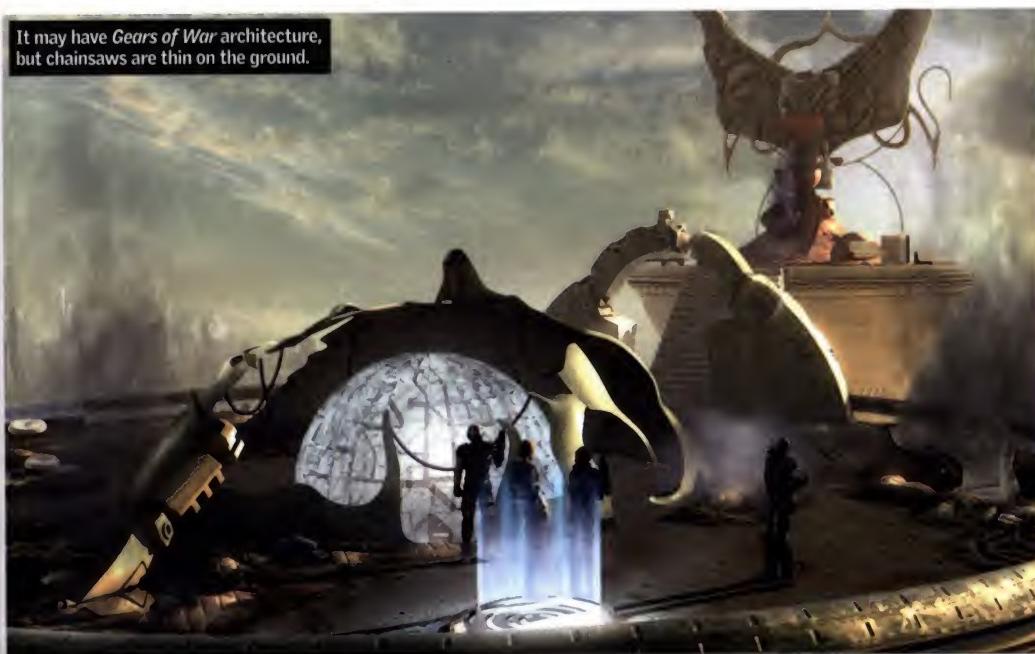
## PCZONE

**Graphics** Psychedelic pop art paint splatters  
**Sound** Guitar riffs that form part of the game  
**Multiplayer** Nada

- ✓ Fantastic soundtrack with integrated riffs and tunes
- ✓ Gorgeous visual style
- ✓ Intriguing level design
- ✗ Can feel a little sluggish
- ✗ Only eight levels

**75**  
 Dreamy

It may have *Gears of War* architecture, but chainsaws are thin on the ground.



# RHODAN: MYTH OF THE ILLOCHIM

**Jon 'Log' Blyth is the rootin', tootin' two-ton Teuton**

DEVELOPER BrainGame

PUBLISHER Deep Silver

WEBSITE perry-rhodan-game.de

ETA Out now

PRICE £19.99

**W**HEN YOU'RE DRIVING the bus of British pop culture, you have to be careful.

There's a massive blind spot on the left-hand side, and it's almost completely filled with Perry Rhodan. Mr Rhodan is the hero of a slightly camp, heroic sci-fi opera that has been around for nearly half a century. In Germany.

The videogame part of this long-running franchise is a traditional point-and-click affair, with an inventory that fills with topics of conversation, as well as items. Tapping S scans the room for anything clickable (a device that was in games like *Secret Files: Tunguska* and Frogwares' new *Sherlock Holmes* games, like *Nemesis* reviewed on page 72), and it goes some way to reducing the potential pixel-scouring frustration of the genre.

This is useful, as the puzzles themselves have plenty of potential for frustration. Some of the puzzles are perfectly satisfying – at one stage, I had to get a pen and paper, which made me feel genuinely clever – in a genuinely stupid way. However, sometimes you'll know the answer, but struggle to tell the game your solution. Other times, it feels like a dozen intuitive solutions will fail, to

be eventually solved with a punch to the temple from leftfield. Getting the password to Bully's computer, for example, is a prime study in how to torture players.

An odd design decision was to use the inventory area for captions, rendering the area unclickable during dialogue. To make matters annoying, talking can't be skipped, no matter how many times you've heard it before. To upgrade annoying to infuriating, the actors' delivery is a long, winding distance from snappy. Conversations are like going on a romantic meal with someone who steals your cutlery while they're talking, and when it comes to finally having sex you discover she's a cardboard cut-out with a tape-player strapped to the back.

*Myth of the Illochim* is a good point-and-click for a patient player – there's a fair bit of reading that fills out the world, it's a good-looking bird, and when you ignore the red herrings of common sense and think in the logic peculiar to *Rhodan*, it does fit together well. Overall this is an above-average sci-fi adventure, but if you're fond of rollercoasters, join a different queue. **PCZ**

## AT A GLANCE...

A space point-and-click based on the 3,000 year old German superstar, Perry Rhodan. Honestly, he's really big in Europe – bigger than pushing donkeys off church roofs.

**Minimum system requirements:**  
1.5GHz processor, 512MB RAM (1GB for Vista) and a 64MB video card.

### HOW IT STACKS

SAM & MAX 2.0: WHAT'S NEW, BEELZEBUB	84%
JACK KEANE	73%
RHODAN: MYTH OF THE ILLOCHIM	62%



## PCZONE

Graphics Beautiful rendered scenes

Sound Too much talking

Multiplayer Nada

- Lots of backstory
- Locations scannable for useful stuff
- Unskippable conversations
- Unintuitive puzzle solutions

# 62

Lightly sparkling Perry



## SHERLOCK HOLMES: NEMESIS

**It's a bit dear, Watson**

**DEVELOPER** Frogwares  
**PUBLISHER** Ascaron  
**WEBSITE** [www.sherlockholmes-thegame.com](http://www.sherlockholmes-thegame.com)  
**ETA** Out now  
**PRICE** £29.99

**Minimum system requirements:**  
 1.3GHz processor, 512MB RAM, and a 64MB video card.



**S**HERLOCK HOLMES HAS been slapped in the face with a garlic-reeking gauntlet. Gentleman thief Arsene Lupin (French for Bum Rabbit, if my GCSE in Foreign doesn't fail me) is planning to show the British what a bunch of witless drudges we are, by stealing a bunch of stuff we like.

Frogwares' *Sherlock Holmes* series are first-person point-and-clicks. This new chapter is a more light-hearted and playful affair than its more morbid Cthulhu-themed predecessor, *The Awakened*, and the battle of great minds between Sherlock and note-dropping Arsene is a much more compelling and satisfying backdrop.

Refreshingly for a foreign game that's arrived on our shores, *Nemesis* is excellently translated – vital in keeping the mood of refined Victoriana. And it's

decently acted, should you take the Scotland Yard Inspector and cauterise his vocal chords with a hot sword.

The game doesn't waste your time with travel – you can run, or jump to locations using the map – and the puzzles force you to work them out, making trial and error of little use. That you can't pick up things until you know you need them is slightly annoying, but then again Sherlock Holmes generally isn't known for toting a heap of crap around, just in case.

Thanks to the story and the writing, this episode of Holmes' adventures is genuinely enjoyable. Frogwares deliver a gentle ride through a deserted world, that will never be associated with the words "visceral" or "wa-hey", but for an occasionally frustrating and overpriced brain-fondle, *Nemesis* is bit of alright.

*Jon Log Blyth*



## TOP TRUMPS: DOCTOR WHO

**Beyond Super Trucks... Beyond the Stars...**

**DEVELOPER** Rockpool  
**PUBLISHER** Eidos  
**WEBSITE** [toptrumps.com](http://toptrumps.com)  
**ETA** Out now  
**PRICE** £19.99

**Minimum system requirements:**  
 Honest to God, you'll be able to run this...



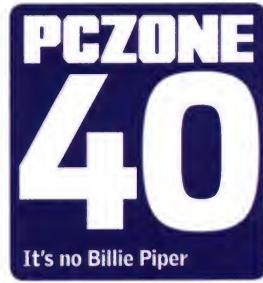
**C**ONFRONTED BY THE fact that the solution to every life-threatening event in *Doctor Who* is David Tennant having an idea, placing his hand on his forehead and shouting a lot, there must have been a few problems when it came to the videogame. The Doctor isn't a fan of run-and-gun violence, while point-and-clicks full of saucily winking bisexual aliens who must be flirted with in exchange for the keys to the Tardis are hardly in vogue.

Bid welcome, then, to *Top Trumps: Doctor Who*. The spirit of playground gaming re-invented by the Timelord himself, even if the versions you may have previously played wouldn't have had you using phrases like *Combo Breaker!* Unsurprisingly, this is a game best suited to a real deck of heavily thumbed, slightly sweat-smelling cards. By its nature the single-player mode gives the computer half the play-time, while the repetitive

rule book of this most simple of games starts to grate a few hands in.

In fact, the only way *Top Trumps: Doctor Who* does work well is as conversation piece. The Face of Boe only with Intelligence of 49? Really? A Dalek statistically less brave than fearless Prime Minister Harriet Jones? Autons (mere automaton puppets of the Nestene Consciousness) with a courage of 50? Pub conversation between *Doctor Who* geeks has rarely been so animated...

*Will Porter*





## IRON MAN

**Today we ended all war! Hurrah!**

**DEVELOPER** Secret Level

**PUBLISHER** Sega

**WEBSITE** ironmanthegame.marvel.com

**ETA** Out now

**PRICE** £19.99

**Minimum system requirements:**

2.8GHz processor, 1GB RAM and a 256MB graphics card.

**J**UST HOW DO you get your editor to review a crappy film tie-in from the publishers who brought you *The Golden Compass* game? "Hey Will! It's like *Tribes*! Don't you like *Tribes*? *Tribes*, eh?" Now for the record, *Iron Man* is not at all like *Tribes*. It's like *Tribes* in that you have jet thrusters, but unlike *Tribes* in that it looks and plays like a half-finished PlayStation 2 game that demands as much mental activity as you'd usually find in the recently deceased.

After a truly woeful cave network level in which you get to clomp about destroying crates (crates!) with a flamethrower, you're given the power to – which, in fairness, is cool. You can hover about on boosters, but with a tap of the alt key lunge into an aerodynamic swoop that can be neatly tweaked in different directions by WSAD and switches of the mouse. In fact, if there's one thing to commend this awful game, it's that at least the switch to PC



keyboard hasn't proved especially traumatic.

Combat though, is miserable. You just hose down identical bad guys with one weapon, get bored and try another. Inter-mission upgrades to your suit are confusing and needless, cutscenes amateurish, the graphics risible and oh... it's just utter, utter shit.

Will Porter



Why bother going to the cinema?



## BUS SIMULATOR 2008

**Cue pretend excitement**

**DEVELOPER** Contendo

**PUBLISHER** Global Software Publishing

**WEBSITE** bussimulatorgame.com

**ETA** Out now

**PRICE** £19.99

**Minimum system requirements:**

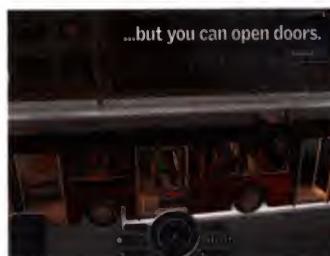
1.7GHz processor, 512MB RAM and a 128MB video card.

**M**Y UNCLE WAS a bus driver and when prompted to talk about it (or anything) a single tear would roll down his cheek. "Words cannot express," he'd waver, "what it feels like to drive a bus."

Since then I have strove to attain this experience by sitting as close to the front of the bus as possible. Until I played *Bus Simulator 2008*, I honestly felt that by sitting at the very front of the top deck, I'd known what it felt like to be a really tall bus driver. Hah! What a fool I was.

My uncle was driven mad by buses. When he wasn't driving a bus, he wanted to be driving a bus. When he was driving a bus, he wanted to be driving a smaller bus, inside the bus he was already in. *Bus Simulator 2008* bottles this insane passion and delivers it to you through the medium of one extremely shoddily put together game.

See, when they're being driven by Sandra Bullock, or being ridden by a giant Ken Livingstone in a cowboy hat in

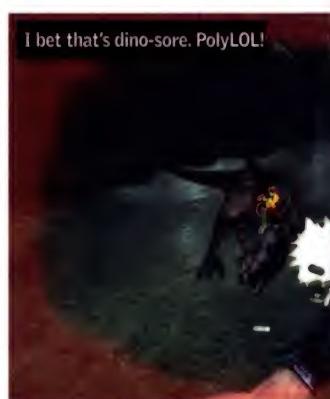


a political cartoon, buses are the least exciting mode of public transport there is. This is the inherent and obvious humour unwittingly paraded by *Bus Simulator 2008*, and the reason people like me fall over themselves trying to bleat out their constipated bus-centric comedy routines whenever this game is mentioned.

So yes, this game is exactly as terrible as you might expect. In every aspect – which is a form of achievement, I guess.

Steve Hogarty





# TUROK

The dinosaur hunter is back, but has he evolved? Cerebral bore Jamie Sefton discovers a prehistoric shooter...

**DEVELOPER** Propaganda Games  
**PUBLISHER** Touchstone  
**WEBSITE** turok.com  
**ETA** Out now  
**PRICE** £24.99

**O**N HEARING I was to give the verdict on a new *Turok* game, one that was created by a brand-new development team and that sneaked onto shelves while most people weren't looking, I was ready to rip into it like a T-Rex in a paddock of American tourists. However, despite its obvious console roots, *Turok* isn't that bad – it's just primeval bog-standard.

In the late '90s, the *Turok* series pioneered great FPS graphics (well, it was the first game I saw with lens flare) and innovative weapons such as the cerebral bore. Propaganda may have dumped that excellent decapitator, but they've retained the central hero, re-inventing him as a gung-ho marine, sent to a terraformed planet to bring down a renegade leader.

## AT A GLANCE...

An average shooter with some good weapons and dinosaurs – but it's let down by its unimaginative and inconsistent gameplay.

**Minimum system requirements:**  
 2.4GHz processor, 1GB RAM and a 128MB graphics card.

HOW IT STACKS	CRYYSIS	92%
PETER JACKSON'S KING KONG	83%	
TUROK	61%	

of massive meat-eating predators. You can only perform comedic rolls left and right to avoid the snapping jaws.

Combat is a well-worn mix of close-up attacks, hectic firefights and sniping with the odd gun turret thrown in. *Turok*'s hunting knife is often the best weapon against scores of prehistoric predators, as any close proximity to them allows you to press the left mouse button to trigger one of a few satisfying "stab dinosaur" animation sequences. These show *Turok* ruthlessly wrestling and hacking the poor creatures to death – although it's rather hit-and-miss when it works. You can also use the knife to slice the throats of any human foes if you manage to sneak up behind them, but with no stealth indicators and patchy AI, it's easy to alert them to your sneaking presence and you soon have to resort to larger weaponry. Far more effective stealth kills are achieved by using *Turok*'s trusty bow, which can be used to snipe distant enemies.

However, the main weapons – trusty items such as the shotgun, pulse rifle and flamethrower – are your main staple. Each has alternative fire modes, such as the sticky bomb gun's ability to create smart mini-minefields that send ragdolls

bodies flying. Although there is a decent selection of firepower, a splattering of blood and the ability to dual-wield, the weapons just don't feel meaty enough – enemies seem to take an endless barrage of bullets before they'll stubbornly give up and lie down, dead.

## FPS PREHISTORY

As you've got me talking about negatives there are also the stupid action events, where you have to tap keys or mouse buttons to escape the jaws of dinosaurs, which help make *Turok* feel like a kid's game. Then there's the annoying checkpoint saving system, invisible walls and objects you can walk straight through, boring characters and dialogue, and uninspired level design. Also, even though the tribal music is good and the dinosaur animation sometimes brilliant (see Jurassic Larks box), the supposedly-lush jungle graphics occasionally looks amateurish.

Having *Turok* joined by one or two gruff AI team-mates from





## Jurassic Larks

*Turok's dinosaurs are the best bit in the game...*

The line above continues, "...which is surprising, because non-human enemies are always rubbish."

You can usually throw as many mythical beasts, dinosaurs or flying aliens at us, but the best enemies in shooters are always human, or at least humanoid.

Yet, the dinosaurs in *Turok* are great – from scampering nuisances that bite your heels to the lumbering great T-Rex that can pick up and chomp down any human in seconds.

A particular favourite are the dino-lizards called the lurkers, creatures that wrap themselves around trees before sliding down and attacking you at speed. You can also watch the AI enemies fight each other, so packs of raptors will sometimes turn on another dinosaur or a stupid henchmen rather than take you on. So, hooray for dinosaurs – they may be extinct, but they're officially the least shit thing in *Turok*...



Lara who? Never heard of her.



Dated, in multiple ways.



Whiskey Company in parts of the game is a brave move by Propaganda, and it's actually enjoyable (and useful) watching your butch chums taking down a few toothy raptors or dumb henchmen, while co-op multiplayer is a welcome addition.

There are so many great shooters on PC already, that it's hard to recommend *Turok* – it's not awful by any means, but it's just not up to the standards set by *Crysis*, *Far Cry* or even *Peter Jackson's King Kong*.

While *Turok* does create a world you can certainly have moments of fun inhabiting, with great multiplayer options (if you can find anyone to play with), it's terribly inconsistent and feels like a shooter from the last century. This impression is amplified when you think about the storytelling and interaction advancements made to the genre by

games such as *BioShock* and *Half-Life 2: Episode Two*. So while *Turok* isn't prehistoric, it's probably the last of the old-school FPS species. 

## PCZONE

Graphics Some great animation, shoddy environments

Sound Atmospheric SFX and music

Multiplayer Yes, inc. two-player co-op

- ✓ Decent dinosaurs
- ✓ Enjoyable in places
- ✗ Boring, linear level design
- ✗ Dull NPCs and story
- ✗ Weapons lack "oomph"

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It's Tur-OK

You won't find any of these games in the shops, but you can download them or get trial versions on our DVD.



ON THE DVD

This month, *Martin Korda* attempts to hold back the alien tide again and again and again...

# ASTRO AVENGER II

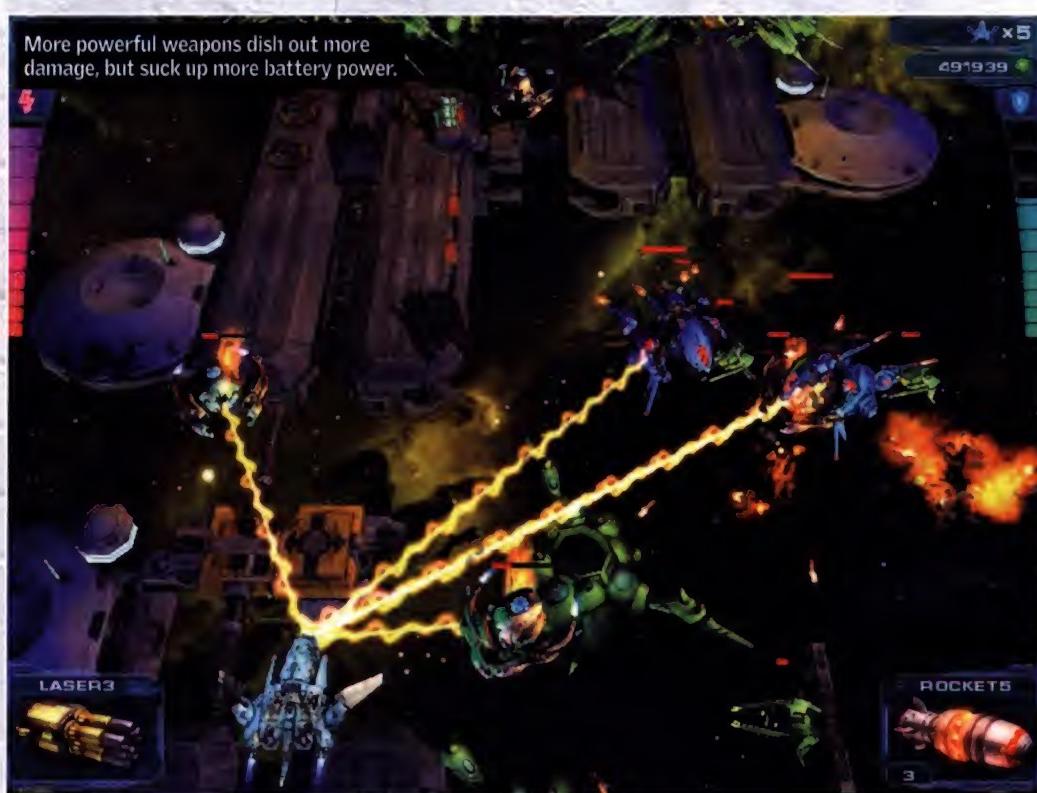
DEVELOPER Sahmon Games WEBSITE [sahmon.com](http://sahmon.com) PRICE \$19.95 (£10)



Power-ups help you kill more aliens.



More powerful weapons dish out more damage, but suck up more battery power.



**C**HANCES ARE YOU never played *Astro Avenger*, and so missed out. But now Sahmon Games have given you a second chance to experience one of the most intense and entertaining indie arcade blasters of the last few years.

While it may be more clichéd than a muscle-bound hero shouting "Come get some!" in a first-person shooter, *Astro Avenger II* proves to be even more entertaining than its predecessor. Battling a race of alien invaders in your unique hi-tech fighter craft, you must dart through a series of increasingly

intense space shootouts against ever-greater numbers of enemy craft.

Fuelled by a rousing musical score, the blistering action provides breakneck and uncompromising arcade action. Enemies come in a variety of shapes and sizes, ranging from nippy, lightly armoured fighters to trundling motherships packing devastating firepower. The sheer weight of enemy numbers can often seem overwhelming, yet some excellent balancing ensures you always feel as though you've got a chance of fighting your way out of even the tightest corner.

Aiding your cause are ship upgrades that you can purchase at the end of each quick-fire mission. These include upgradeable weapons, dumb and homing missiles and drones, including repair and anti-missile robots that buzz around your ship. You can even trade in your vessel for a superior model and enjoy more missile slots, increased battery power (used for powering your weapons) and more durable armour. You can also pick up an impressive selection of power-ups during each level, which range from invulnerability to weapon augmentations.

While the presentation and action are of a high quality, a few shortcomings prevent *Astro Avenger II* from truly leaving its rivals for dead. There's a distinct lack of characterisation that would give your foes substance for example, and transform them from a succession of buzzing enemy ships into a tangible, motivated foe. And a little more imagination in terms of level design wouldn't have gone astray.

Searing, epic and challenging without ever becoming frustrating, *Astro Avenger II* is, nevertheless, a triumph of unceasing action that'll have your trigger finger begging for mercy but your mind pleading for more.

**INDIE ZONE  
GAME OF THE MONTH**

**PCZONE  
82**

An adrenalin high

# HARVEST: MASSIVE ENCOUNTER

DEVELOPER Oxeye Games WEBSITE [oxeyegames.com](http://oxeyegames.com) PRICE \$24.99 (£13)

## HARVEST: MASSIVE ENCOUNTER

is a mishmash of tower defence, real-time strategy and resource gathering gameplay mechanics. Build energy generators and harvesters, then use the collected resources to purchase defensive towers and missile silos to fend off waves of attacking aliens. You can battle increasingly large waves of foes that bear down on your defences at regular intervals, or build a titanic base then trigger enormous enemy attacks when you're ready.

The size of some of the battles is staggering, and during these epic encounters you truly feel as though you're being beset by a determined and

terrifying enemy force, rather than the usual dribble of enemies thrown at you by most other tower defence games.

There are some interesting ideas here, including the ability to link power sources and turrets to increase their power and range, but the lack of building variety, samey enemies and an unshakable feeling that once you start to lose there's little or no way back, conspire to undermine *Harvest: Massive Encounter*'s undeniably high fun factor and condemn it to the status of interesting novelty rather than essential purchase.

**PCZONE**  
**68**



# PLANET DEFENDER

DEVELOPER Share-Games WEBSITE [share-games.com](http://share-games.com) PRICE \$19.95 (£10)

**MANNING A FULLY** rotatable space cannon, you must repel waves of alien craft heading for your home world. Sounds like a laff, right? Wrong. For starters, the action is ponderous in the extreme – enemy craft amble through the cosmos, making themselves easy targets. This plodding pace sucks *Planet Defender* dry of any immediacy or



tension, ensuring that at no point do you feel as thought you're a planet's last line of defence.

What's more, there's no enemy radar – just an arrow pointing towards the direction of oncoming foes – while the music is so repetitive and badly recorded it'll have your eardrums bleeding from distress. The 40 weapon combinations and 14 bonuses are impressive enough, but it's likely you'll lose interest long before you've sampled even half of them.

While the visuals are fairly impressive for an indie game, *Planet Defender* is so repetitive that it's highly likely you'll more than get your fill from the demo.

**PCZONE**  
**45**



## PCZONE Top 5 indie... Tower Defence games



**MASTER OF DEFENSE**  
WEBSITE [towerdefence.com](http://towerdefence.com)  
Reviewed Issue: 168  
Excellent visuals, charismatic and varied enemies, flashes of humour and imaginative towers, plenty of meaty turret upgrades and an innovative RPG-style experience point allocation system with which you can boost your turrets' abilities, combine to create the finest tower defence game on the market.



**WICKED DEFENSE**  
WEBSITE [defense.ixchels.net](http://defense.ixchels.net)  
Reviewed Issue: 191  
Highly enjoyable and quirky, *Wicked Defense* features an impressive array of upgradeable turrets and crippling special attacks.



**IMMORTAL DEFENSE**  
WEBSITE [studioer.es](http://studioer.es)  
Reviewed Issue: 186  
This frenetic tower defence game makes up for its lack of visual allure with a solid plot and some intense action.



**HARVEST: MASSIVE ENCOUNTER**  
WEBSITE [oxeyegames.com](http://oxeyegames.com)  
Reviewed Issue: 196  
Making it straight into the Top 5 is this month's alternative offering, which adds RTS elements to a traditional tower defence formula.



**AZGARD DEFENCE**  
WEBSITE [moregames-pc.com](http://moregames-pc.com)  
Reviewed Issue: 195  
*Azgard Defence* boasts 30 enemy types (including aerial units) and some decent turrets, it does lack visual variety though.

# BUDGET

Wander down Cheap Street,  
moving onto Skinflint Row

## COMPANY OF HEROES

PUBLISHER: THQ WEBSITE: companyofheroesgame.com PRICE: £9.99

**A**NYONE WITH THE vaguest interest in strategy, tension or do-or-die heroics should own *Company of Heroes*.

With most RTS games there's an element of emotional distance involved, clicking on a unit and watching it blankly hose down an enemy emplacement just like the hundreds before it, but with



A war! A war!

*Company of Heroes* there's grit, fear and determination thrown into the mix. Bereft of resource management and instead coupled to Relic's brilliant (patent presumably not still pending) kill for units and unlocks system, *COH* consistently urges you into the fray and into cover rather than sullenly turtling in wrecked French towns.

Making you feel like a true military tactician one minute and the man who shouted 'That way!' at the Light Brigade the next, *COH* still provides a weighty gut-wrenching punch on all levels.

*COH* can be had at Steam for about the same amount of cash.

**PCZONE  
90**



**BUDGET  
GAME  
OF THE  
MONTH**



Should've bought that double glazing.

THIS MONTH  
**PCZONE**  
SAVED MONEY BY...

Will discovered that you don't have to pay to get your glasses screwed back together.  
**Saving:** a presumed £10

Steve claimed to have stopped buying coffee.  
**Saving:** Nothing. He lied

Will stole several tray's worth of food from the publishers' board room.  
**Saving:** A good £15

## SUPREME COMMANDER

PUBLISHER: THQ WEBSITE: supremecommander.com PRICE: £9.99

**BIG CLOMPY ROBOTS**, mushroom clouds and a world view that renders all as primary-coloured dots make *SupCom* a worthy, challenging and clever take on wide-scale global combat. Mammoth bases are built, waypoints clearly demarcated, build times organised tactically and successful missions then rewarded by an expansion of the play area and manifold new threats to life within.

The interface is a bit of a marvel, but you won't be frantically clicking here and there when the game hits its stride. Even the most frenzied *SupCom* general will stop and stare at the game's flagship superweapons – the UEF Fatboy is an outright work of art.

So *SupCom* is well worth a buy. You shouldn't have many problems actually getting your machine to run it properly these days either.

**PCZONE  
85**



"I can't believe we all came wearing the same colour."



Some tall robots.



Some wet robots.

# PRISON TYCOON 3: LOCKDOWN

PUBLISHER: Avenquest/Steam WEBSITE: [snipurl.com/prisontycoon3](http://snipurl.com/prisontycoon3) PRICE: £10

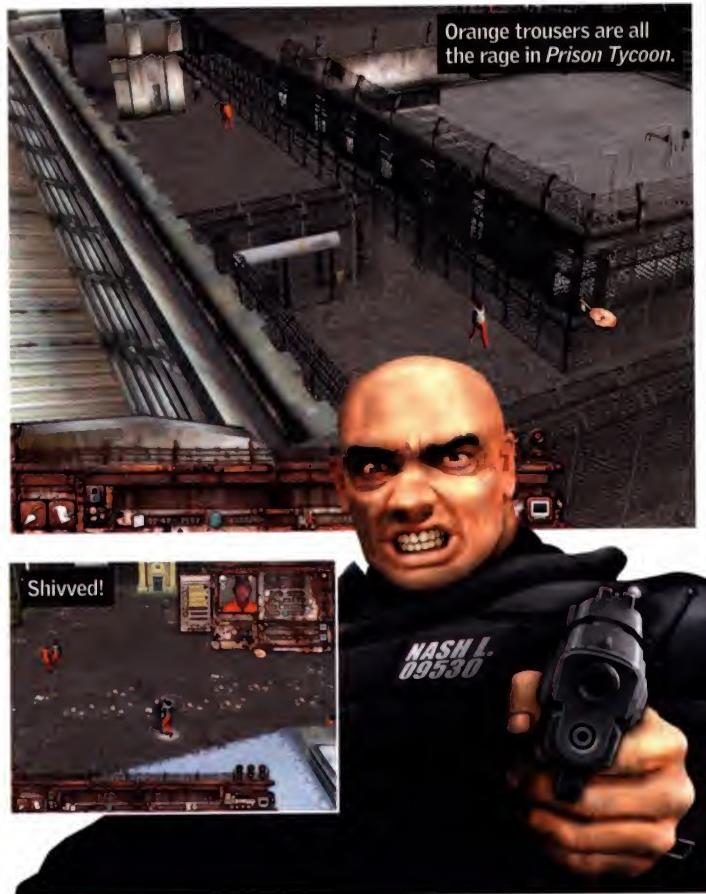
**THE MOST OUTSTANDING** thing about the *Prison Tycoon* series is the fact that it's made it to this, the game's third iteration.

It's a bit of a comedy cliché to imagine a whimsical development process, but it does help to imagine the devs excitedly suggesting "Let's make the prisoners even sassier," or "Let's study the mismatched worlds of extreme masculinity and Hobson's choice homosexuality with jokes in the showers". The reality is, of course, a mirthless treadmill of just-good-enough Identikit *Tycoon* rubbish, but it's more pleasant to imagine that someone, somewhere cares.

If you've played any of the budget *Tycoon* games, you'll recognise the template immediately. Hell, the template fits even the best *Tycoon* games from their '90s heyday. The only way to charm *Tycoon*-savvy punters is to make the premise entertaining, and slap some playable detail meat on the poor, embarrassed bones of the genre.

*Prison Tycoon 3*, however, is a doctor's skeleton, held up by the inexplicable fact that the first two games sold enough to justify making this one.

**PCZONE  
35**



# PAINKILLER UNIVERSE

PUBLISHER: JoWood WEBSITE: [painkillergame.com](http://painkillergame.com) PRICE: £19.99

**COULD YOU EVER** have too much *Painkiller*? Well, yes. Comprising of the original fun game, the decent expansion and the atrocious fan-made add-on *Overdose* – there are about 50 levels of physics-enhanced madness in here. In all honesty, it's a marathon that's no longer worth running. You can pick *Painkiller* for a bargain-bin fiver, which makes the extra cash demanded by this package an insult to a decent game's memory.

*Overdose*, with endless and joyless streams of bad guys, lamentable weaponry and load times akin to that of '80s cassette-booting, sullies *Painkiller* to the extent that this box set should be stomped on and set alight.

**PCZONE  
50**



## And the rest...

Other ways to avoid unnecessary money fritter-age



### HALF-LIFE - COMPLETE

PRICE \$49.99 (£25), Valve/Steam

If, somehow, you've contrived to miss out on the *Half-Life* saga it's now even more unforgivable to not give Freeman a whirl.

**PCZONE  
95**



### COUNTER-STRIKE - COMPLETE

PRICE \$29.99 (£15), Valve/Steam

Few online shooter fanatics don't have *CS:Source*, but this gives you a peek at the risible *Condition Zero* and the non-Source original for a bargain-ish price.

**PCZONE  
73**



### SWORD OF THE STARS COLLECTOR'S EDITION

PRICE £25, Lighthouse

Imagine *Space: Total War*. Awesome, yes? *Sword of the Stars* is that game and it pulls it off with relative aplomb.

**PCZONE  
83**

## PCZONE Top 5 budget games

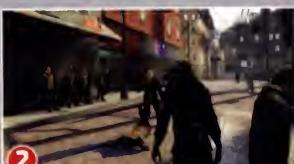


**1**

### DEUS EX

PRICE \$9.99 (£5), Steam

After winning every Best Game Of All Time award around, it doesn't need flattering here. So, we won't. Buy this stupid idiot game for cretins today.



**2**

### HALF-LIFE 2

PRICE \$19.95 (£10), Steam

The game that not only invented the 3D see-saw physics puzzle, but refuses to stop using it to this day, despite our repeated protests.



**3**

### THE ELDER SCROLLS III: MORROWIND

PRICE £4.99, Mastertronic

The precursor to *Oblivion*, Bethesda's classic free-roaming RPG offers cheap goblin-bashing.



**4**

### PSYCHONAUTS

PRICE \$19.99 (£9.99), Steam

Brilliant humour, creative level design and a range of psychic powers propel this quirky title into the stratosphere of the platforming greats.



**5**

### SID MEIER'S PIRATES!

PRICE \$29.99 (£15), Steam

*Pirates!* has the polish expected from the Meier name, and is more instantly fun than any game in the *Civ* series, without sacrificing depth.

# BUYER'S GUIDE

Don't stop buying them until they're bought

## PCZONE Top 5 UNSIMULATED TRANSPORTATION

- 1 LONDON TUBE
- 2 GOODYEAR BLIMP
- 3 PIGGY BACK
- 4 PENNY-FARTHING
- 5 SILVER MECHANICAL WOLF



## PCZONE Top 5 VISIBLE CHESTS

- 1 THE SIMS 2
- 2 LULA 3D
- 3 PRINCE OF PERSIA
- 4 WORLD OF WARCRAFT
- 5 BLOODRAYNE (OCT 2004 PLAYBOY)



## PCZONE Top 5 BAD SERVICE PERSONNEL

- 1 HELLGATE'S TECHSMITH 101 (INSIPID SEXUAL PREDATOR)
- 2 MONKEY ISLAND HAIRDRESSER (INITIALLY UNCO-OPERATIVE)
- 3 SAM & MAX'S BOSCO (VIOLENT PARANOID)
- 4 FABLE'S PROSTITUTE (HARDLY AN OIL PAINTING)
- 5 FAHRENHEIT WAITRESS (FRIENDLY ENOUGH, WE'RE JUST BAD TIPPERS)



## FPS

**Must buy!**



### HALF-LIFE 2 + EPISODES

PCZ Issue: 148 (97%), 170 (91%), 187 (82%)  
Excelling in terms of action, storyline, emotion and ingenious set pieces, the continuing adventures of Gordon Freeman have yet to be equalled. Yes, a moderate amount of the action has faded through repetition by the time the episodes kick in, but with its Combine-defying freedom fighting, this is still the most finely crafted shooter experience ever released on PC. Gordon's alive, and long may he remain so.



### BIOSHOCK

PCZ Issue: 185 - 96%  
The pson of *System Shock 2*, *BioShock* will suck you right into its intricate, art deco world. A destroyed Utopia under the sea, terrifying characters and emergent combat make this an unmissable experience.



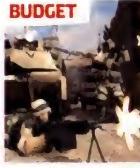
### TEAM FORTRESS 2

PCZ Issue: 187 - 93%  
Beautifully balanced and engaging, Valve's update of the classic mod is a triumph, bringing together everything that's good about online shooters and topping it all off with superb animation that rivals Pixar's films.



### UNREAL TOURNAMENT III

PCZ Issue: 189 - 90%  
The daddy of online shooters returns with a mule-kick of intense deathmatch, epic vehicles, high-speed combat, Warfare mode, and a graphical sheen that outdoes its ageing insta-gib rivals.



### BATTLEFIELD 2

PCZ Issue: 157 - 94%  
If it's online action you want, look no further. *Bf2* sets the gold standard for team-based shooting, with huge 64-player maps, squad and commander modes and the ability to zap people with medic shock pads.



### CRYYSIS

PCZ Issue: 188 - 92%  
A retooled, condensed *Cry* for newer hardware, with *Crysis*'s neat nanosuit and 'anything can happen' action-bubble mentality making it a winner. The last act falters, but the Korean-bullying is endlessly replayable.



### CALL OF DUTY 4: MODERN WARFARE

PCZ Issue: 188 - 89%  
Big, brash and extremely loud, Infinity Ward's latest ultra-intense shooter offers some strikingly original military action. With superb multiplayer in tow, it's often an utter delight to play.

## Strategy

**Must buy!**



### COMPANY OF HEROES

PCZ Issue: 173 - 93%

Despite hailing from that most overpopulated of genres, the WWII RTS, *Company of Heroes* is still number one is a testament to how utterly refined and slick it is. Relic have taken the best bits from strategy games and stripped out the crap, leaving you with a game that's fun, intelligent, accessible, taxing, tactical and exciting. And with so many positives in one sentence, you know it must be good.



### WORLD IN CONFLICT

PCZ Issue: 186 - 92%  
A stunning RTS set at the height of the Cold War, offering innovative online play, a solid single-player campaign, jaw-dropping graphics and the best nuclear blast you've seen.



### CIVILIZATION IV

PCZ Issue: 162 - 92%  
A Buyer's Guide without a *Civ* game would be a sorry place, and the latest version is the greatest yet. Now with added warmongering and diplomacy thanks to the expansion packs.



### SINS OF A SOLAR EMPIRE

PCZ Issue 193 - 91%  
This startling beauty came from nowhere, and quickly converted us from indifferent idiots into grateful idiots by surprising us with accessible complexity.



### MEDIEVAL II: TOTAL WAR

PCZ Issue: 175 - 91%  
A blend of maniacal plotting on the strategic map and cheering with delight as your warriors collide spectacularly with your opponents' armies. Middle Ages war fun.



### RISE OF NATIONS: RISE OF LEGENDS

PCZ Issue: 168 - 91%  
Takes the great gameplay of *RON*, improves on it with elements from *Civ IV* and wraps the whole lot in a gorgeous sci-fi setting. An RTS bursting with innovation.



### SUPREME COMMANDER

PCZ Issue: 179 - 88%  
Huge battles of thousands of air, sea and land units? Giant stompy robots and a superb tactical map? One of the most original RTS titles around? Check check and check.

## Action/Adventure

**Must buy!**



### GEARS OF WAR

PCZ Issue: 188 - 90%

Who knew the all-conquering console title would work so well with a mouse and keyboard? *GOW*'s skirmishes against the aggressive Locust Horde are enjoyably tactical, while its cover system and difficulty level combine to make you genuinely fear the bullets flying around you. With the battle against the almighty Brumak near the game's close, the PC has the best version of an already excellent shooter. So hooray for us.



### MAX PAYNE 2: THE FALL OF MAX PAYNE

PCZ Issue: 136 - 93%  
Showing its wrinkles a bit now, but it shows how to do bullet-time right. Noirish tone, a glowering voice-over and remarkable gun action mean that Payne is still a force to contend with.



### GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS

PCZ Issue: 155 - 92%  
To think that the simple top-down car game has turned into this – a work of creative genius. Violent, brutal, smutty, freeform and hilarious – *San Andreas* is the pinnacle of gaming.



### SPLINTER CELL: CHAOS THEORY

PCZ Issue: 154 - 91%  
A tour de force from Ubisoft, *Chaos Theory* takes the *Splinter Cell* format and runs with it in solo, co-op and the now well-established spies vs mercs multiplayer. Smooth, lithe and good with a knife.



### FAHRENHEIT (NO MAN'S LAND)

PCZ Issue: 159 - 90%  
Murder most foul, with you as the killer. Boasts a twisting, turning, brilliantly told story, featuring multiple character control, split-screen tension, branching scenes and several endings. From the brains behind *The Nomad Soul*.



### PSYCHONAUTS

PCZ Issue: 156 - 90%  
Clever, witty, impeccably detailed and absolutely off its rocker – *Psychonauts* is proof that the anarchic edge of LucasArts hasn't completely left us. A slightly flawed game in some respects, but still a dazzling feat.



### BEYOND GOOD & EVIL

PCZ Issue: 138 - 89%  
We heap praise on this game on a monthly basis, but it's for a reason. Michel Ancel's superb journey through the strange land of Hillys is nothing short of storytelling magic. It's cheap now, so go out and buy it.



## MMOs



**WORLD OF WARCRAFT**  
PCZ Issue: 152 - 95%  
Blizzard's recreation of Azeroth doesn't disappoint. Beautiful to watch, absorbing to play and with more content than you can shake a magic stick at.



**LOTR ONLINE**  
PCZ Issue: 182 - 87%  
A near-perfect recreation of Tolkien's tales, with solid combat and engaging plots, in a tasty MMO bundle. Meet Gandalf! Play as a hobbit or a spider! Middle-earth awaits...



**EVERQUEST II**  
PCZ Issue: 150 - 95%  
*EQII* gives the original game a much-needed lick of paint, and adds a whole new world to play in and a greater sense of depth and immersion. A timesink in a good way.



**GUILD WARS**  
PCZ Issue: 156 - 94%  
How to make a gaming accessible to the masses. A lot of thought has been applied, and there are no subscription fees. Newbies can feel at home, thanks to a totally skills-based setup.



**EVE ONLINE**  
PCZ Issue: 130 - 88%  
*Elite* online has been a long-held fantasy, and this space sim has come the closest yet to making it a reality. A slow pace belies the options on offer, from mining to trading to piracy.

## Sport



**FOOTBALL MANAGER 2008**  
PCZ Issue: 188 - 90%  
The latest version of the 'still playing at 3am' title is all about noob-atraction and an improved interface. As usual, *FM* succeeds, and is the best management sim on earth.



**PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 2008**  
PCZ Issue: 188 - 87%  
Still in a different league to *FIFA*, *PES* lacks the official stamp but offers amazingly lifelike football. Whether it's end-to-end stuff or a nil-nil slog, it's always compelling.



**TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 06**  
PCZ Issue: 161 - 85%  
Not the most recent version, but still our favourite, *Tiger 06* has you time-travelling as Mr Woods. The best PC golf game yet, mainly thanks to the two career modes.



**FIFA 08**  
PCZ Issue: 188 - 80%  
A veritable compendium of all that is football, and a good sports game too, the recent *FIFA* still lags behind *PES*, but benefits from layers of EA spit and polish. A decent variant of the beautiful game.



**NHL 08**  
PCZ Issue: 187 - 80%  
Bringing the American sport we 'get' (it's like Speedball!) to our PCs, the latest *NHL* is chock-full of large Canadians knocking seven bells out of each other. Exciting, fast, smooth and exhilarating.

## Simulation



**X3: REUNION**  
PCZ Issue: 162 - 92%  
Finally, a space sim to better *X3: The Threat*, and it just happens to be the sequel. Possibly the best-looking game ever to appear on a PC. Oh, and it plays pretty well to boot.



**IL-2 STURMOVIK: FORGOTTEN BATTLES**  
PCZ Issue: 128 - 92%  
While flight sims are getting rarer and rarer, at least the quality remains high. None are more impressive than this ultra-classy WWII combat sim. Chocks away, comrade!



**MICROSOFT FLIGHT SIMULATOR X**  
PCZ Issue: 175 - 89%  
This latest iteration in the *Microsoft Flight Sim* series is the biggest since they started using actual polygons. What's more, the visuals may just sear your eyeballs.



**FREELANCER**  
PCZ Issue: 128 - 84%  
If *X3* is too slow for you, *Freelancer* should fit the bill. Plenty of trading, bounty-hunting and space piracy, but with the emphasis on action rather than realism. Space has never been this much fun.



**SILENT HUNTER 4: WOLVES OF THE PACIFIC**  
PCZ Issue: 181 - 82%  
If a tale beneath the waves tickles your fancy, then this submarine simulator fits the bill. Tactics, torpedoes, sonar and sailors combine to make the ultimate ship-sinker.

## Driving/Racing



**GTR 2**  
PCZ Issue: 173 - 92%  
Then pick up this scarily realistic driving sim and race the car of your dreams. It comes with an improved driving model, new modes and many other improvements.



**RACE DRIVER: GRID**  
PCZ Issue: 195 - 88%  
Codemasters moves the series from its historical simulation roots, strips off the TOCA and creates a Hollywood-realistic game with plenty of play modes and global challenges.



**LIVE FOR SPEED**  
PCZ Issue: 158 - 90%  
Online racing at its best. *LFS* has realistic handling, hilarious crashes and a racing community second to none. A remarkable achievement by such a small team.



**COLIN MCRAE: DIRT**  
PCZ Issue: 183 - 88%  
This time the rallying legend treats us to a host of other off-road events, an excitable Travis Pastrana and some of the best-looking graphics to grace any driving game on PC.



**GT LEGENDS**  
PCZ Issue: 161 - 92%  
While *GTR* takes care of modern-day racing, *GT Legends*, a successor to *Grand Prix Legends*, does the business for historical driving. It's like the swinging '60s never ended.



All approximate monthly dates are correct at the time of going to press

## Oddball



**PORTAL**  
PCZ Issue: 187 - 89%  
Ingenious and absurdly funny, *Portal* is a four-hour slice of perfect puzzles and discovery. Hurling yourself through floors and walls sounds odd, but games are rarely more delightful.



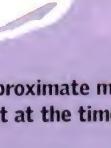
**GARRY'S MOD**  
PCZ Issue: 179 - 88%  
The god game-like *Garry's Mod* gives you the tools to create almost anything you can think of in the Source engine, from working robots to saucy ragdoll JPEGs. Try it out and see for yourself.



**VIVA PIÑATA**  
PCZ Issue: 190 - 85%  
Madder than a mercury-blooded clown, *Viva Piñata* looks simple but is a ridiculously addictive animal-raising sandbox game. Don't be put off by the kiddie graphics – it's a keeper.



**PEGGLE DELUXE**  
PCZ Issue: 183 - 83%  
A weeping unicorn and a sequence of bagatelle-inspired peg-bouncing puzzles combine to make a casual game of unparalleled addictiveness. If you doubt us, you haven't played it.



**THE MOVIES**  
PCZ Issue: 162 - 95%  
Life as a movie mogul – games don't get better than this. Not only a god/management game par excellence, but also a complete home movie-making kit. Build a studio and make your own films. Brilliant.

## Role-playing games



**THE ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION**  
PCZ Issue: 167 - 95%  
*Oblivion*'s sublime graphics, intuitive character-creation and massive freeform gameplay put paid to the myth that you have to own a beard to enjoy RPGs.



**MASS EFFECT**  
PCZ Issue: 195 - 92%  
Possibly BioWare's best game since *KOTOR*, with a new combat system that makes it feel a bit less RPG. Great story, fine action, brilliant dialogue and space sex – it's a modern must.



**THE WITCHER**  
PCZ Issue: 188 - 88%  
Adult and intelligent, the world of *The Witcher* is as fascinating as it is violent and corrupt. With moral bite and an epic story, this has come out of nowhere to revive an ailing genre.



**THE ELDER SCROLLS III: MORROWIND**  
PCZ Issue: 116 - 94%  
This could be the most intimidating yet wonderful game we've ever played – the breadth and depth of *Morrowind* remains a remarkable achievement.



**DEUS EX**  
PCZ Issue: 93 - 94%  
This is the benchmark in FPS RPGs. A twisting plot, exciting freeform levels and some moments of pure exhilaration and drama ensure *Deus Ex* remains the alpha male of gaming.

## INCOMING!

### July

**ALONE IN THE DARK  
DEVIL MAY CRY 4  
SUPREME RULER 2020**

ATARI  
CAPCOM  
PARADOX INTERACTIVE

### Summer

**A VAMPYRE STORY  
MERCENARIES 2: WORLD IN FLAMES  
SPACE SIEGE  
SPORE  
STALKER: CLEAR SKY**

ASCARON  
EA  
SEGA  
EA  
DEEP SILVER

### Autumn

**AION: TOWER OF ETERNITY  
EMPIRE: TOTAL WAR  
FALLOUT 3  
FAR CRY 2  
GHOSTBUSTERS  
LEFT 4 DEAD  
LEGO BATMAN  
PROJECT ORIGIN  
RED ALERT 3  
TIBERIUM  
WARHAMMER ONLINE: AGE OF RECKONING**

NCSCFT  
SEGA  
BETHESDA  
UBISOFT  
VIVENDI  
VALVE  
WARNER BROS.  
WARNER BROS.  
EA  
EA  
EA  
EA  
GOA

### TBC

**MAFIA II  
RISE OF THE ARGONAUTS  
PRINCE OF PERSIA  
STARCRAFT II  
WORLD OF WARCRAFT: WRATH OF THE LICH KING**

2K  
CODEMASTER  
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BLIZZARD  
BLIZZARD



XBOX 360™  
THE OFFICIAL XBOX MAGAZINE

World's first look at Call of Duty 5!

# CALL OF DUTY WORLD AT WAR

New maps, weapons  
and multiplayer revealed!

## EXCLUSIVE PREVIEWS!

Far Cry 2

Alpha Protocol

Banjo-Kazooie: Nuts & Bolts

Prince of Persia

ISSUE 35  
OUT NOW!





# PCZONE

# HARDWARE

Better gaming through technology

## Bloody farmers

**T**EAM FORTRESS 2 HAS become unbearable these past few weeks, the clowns at Valve having decided that what the game really needed was a bunch of new weapons to which people could gain access by playing like arseholes.

The weapons in question belong to the Medic and are unlocked after you've met some random targets. Assist a Scout to kill four enemies while invulnerable, accumulate 10 million health points, plus a host of other faintly idiotic things you'd never normally do unless you played the game obsessively both night and day.

Now every server in Christendom is overrun with Medics playing in a manner which gets them new guns, rather than a win for their team – a process known as farming. You can't play a game while it's going on and it's been going on for weeks now. Heaven knows what it'll be like when unlocks appear for the other classes.

However, one of the cooler aspects of PC ownership is the fact you can turn your rig into an internet games host and in the evenings I've been setting up a server called "Farming Only", the name attracting dozens of zombies, each of them hell bent on getting an Übersaw rather than doing their homework.

What I do is invite one of them to participate in a particularly lengthy achievement with me, and then shut down the server just before it's completed. You've never seen such language in the Steam Friends list.

Phil Wand, hardware editor

**WARNING:**  
THIS MONTH'S  
HARD WORDS

BY JON 'LOG' BLYTH

## ACER'S PREDATOR

**World's third largest PC manufacturer gets into gaming with the world's most aggressive looking case**

**A**CER'S NEW PREDATOR system comes in a copper-coloured case that looks like it might have been designed by *Battlestar Galactica's* Cylons. But the PC itself has several intriguing features, chief among them being the fact it's an Acer.

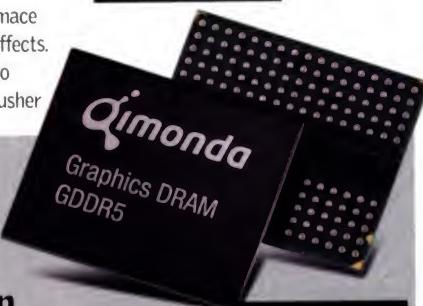
The company ranks as the world's number three maker of PCs and the number two vendor for notebooks, yet you've probably never seen one up close. Acer know they're not the trendiest brand in gaming, and that's one of the reasons their name is absent from Predator cases.

What's not missing is a flip-top chassis design, side-panel access to hard drive arrays, liquid cooling, Blu-ray reader, Core 2 Extreme processor, NVIDIA three-way SLI motherboard and – most importantly – flashing LEDs which bathe everything from the keyboard to the toothy plastic grimace on the front panel in iffy lighting effects.

There are four configurations to choose from – Sniper, Trooper, Crusher



Spot the Acer logo.



Faster memory = better processing.

**FAIRYTALE**  
Next-generation  
of Radeons to use GDDR5

**AMD ANNOUNCED THEY'LL** be the first using version five of Graphics Double Data Rate memory, more commonly known as GDDR5.

Memory providers Samsung and Qimonda have been working with the Radeon manufacturer to get the new specification ready – the latest is capable of handling four times the bandwidth of GDDR4.

R700-based cards due in the late autumn will be smaller and use less power courtesy of GDDR5's higher data rates. A higher data rate throughout leads to higher base performance down a narrower memory interface, meaning you don't need such a monolithic GPU. [www.amd.com](http://www.amd.com)

**"Acer know they're not the trendiest brand in gaming"**

and Eliminator – their order of magnificence being pretty obvious. Warranty is a guaranteed two years, though pricing is still unknown.

That said, Alienware have recently announced details of their revamped £3,249 ALX system with a configuration not that far removed from Acer's Eliminator, so that price tag might be a pointer. And in which case, start saving now.

[www.acer.com/predator](http://www.acer.com/predator)

## News round-up

A group in Santa Fe – the state capital of New Mexico – is demanding that the city's Wi-Fi hotspots be dismantled as radio signals give them chest pains. Dozens of these 'electro-sensitive' folk are claiming that far-reaching wireless internet networks are a violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

[snipurl.com/wifiallergy](http://snipurl.com/wifiallergy)

Remember I talked about ray tracing a few issues back, saying that today's powerful chips are making the technology plausible? NVIDIA are buying a company called RayScale with a view to using its ray tracing expertise for improving the company's current rendering techniques.

[rayscale.com](http://rayscale.com)

**TRIMON:** Jamaican variant of the conclusion of the adage "If at first you don't succeed..." **RAY TRACING:** A popular pastime amongst children in the '80s, who would put greaseproof paper over their *Minder* annual and stencil around the features of a young Ray Winstone. **STINGER:** In Arnold Hill Comprehensive school in 1989, 'Stinger' was the nickname given to a child who had been circumcised, on the basis that "it must have bloody stung". He got off lightly compared to 'Catshagger'. **ALPHA DOG:** Mispronunciation of "Alf The Dog", a series of short stories which document the eye-widening adventures of a perpetually aroused Dachshund. **VENDETTA:** A mathematician who has borrowed an illustrative circle overlapping diagram from a fellow academic.



# DEAR WANDY

If it ain't broke, don't fix it. If it ain't working, don't panic...

## PROBLEMS?

We've all got them, you know... Mistook your wardrobe for the toilet again? Local shop

stopped stocking your favourite blue-flavoured Pringles? Been playing *WOW* so long your partner's left you? We can't help with those (no, not even the Mighty Wandy), but we can solve all of your hardware hassles. Wandy knows everything and is willing to help if you email him at: [wandy@dearwandy.com](mailto:wandy@dearwandy.com), including as much info as you can and system specs where applicable.



## ANTI-EVERYTHING 2007 PRO NANNY

STOPS HACKERS IN THEIR TRACKS  
BY STOPPING YOU IN YOUR TRACKS  
AS RECOMMENDED BY  
FEARMONGERING BASTARDS  
ACROSS THE ENTIRE INTERNET

Run too much software, and your PC will start to stutter.

## DRIVER WATCH

### GRAPHICS

MANU	DESC	RELEASED
ATI	CATALYST 8.4	16 APR 08
NVIDIA	FORCEWARE 175.16	13 MAY 08

### SOUND

MANU	DESC	RELEASED
CREATIVE	X-Fi 2.15.0006	14 MAR 08
CREATIVE	X-Fi FOR VISTA 2.15.0004	05 NOV 07
CREATIVE	ALCHEMY 1.10.01	15 MAY 08
CREATIVE	AUDIGY, AUDIGY 2, AUDIGY 4 2.09.0016	9 OCT 06

## Q SP GLEE

I've had Windows XP Service Pack 3 showing in my update list for a few days now and wondered what you thought I should do?

I'm cautious about big software changes after some awful problems getting an Internet Explorer update to work many years ago.

Anyway, if you have anything to share about SP3, please let me know.

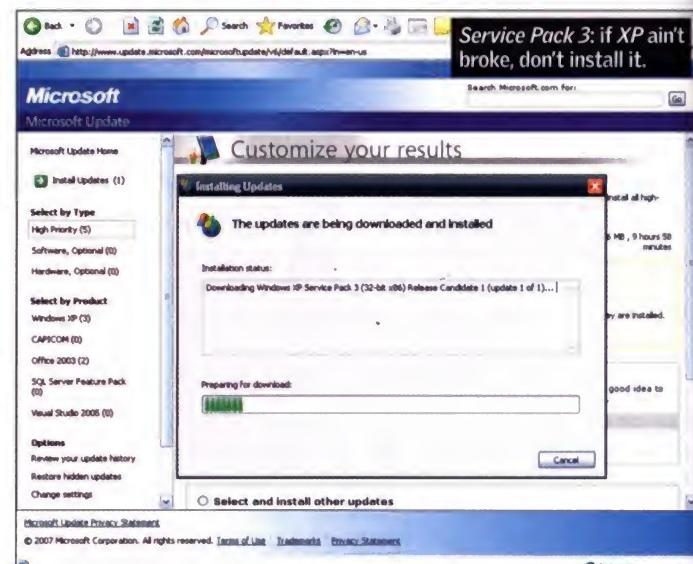
**Jon Richardson**

**A** I had a butt-clenchingly terrible experience installing Vista SP1, so when SP3 for XP turned up not long after I was worried about how much havoc it would wreak and how many times I would remind myself to never mess with a system if there's nothing wrong with it.

And that's my advice to you. Though SP3 contains more than 1,000 updates to everyone's favourite operating system, it's doubtful you've been inconvenienced by one of them. While it's true that there are dozens of fixes to security holes and vulnerabilities, many relate to products and to situations relevant to a tiny minority of people, and none are serious enough to warrant a mention anyway. Let's be frank here: SP2 is still a safe experience for almost all home users.

You have worried me slightly talking about a failed Internet Explorer upgrade. If you're still using an old version, you must get it changed. Today, IE is your window on the internet and as such is arguably the single largest vulnerability in the history of computing.

All that said, I can tell you that SP3 installed fine on my test mule, but it doesn't include IE7. For that you'll need a separate update from Microsoft, that's available at [snipurl.com/ie7download](http://snipurl.com/ie7download). Get to it.



## Q DOUBLE TROUBLE

I need a little advice on the best way to upgrade my system.

I have a Core 2 Duo E6750 and 4GB OCZ RAM on a Gigabyte N650SLI-DS4L board. I currently have an XFX GeForce 8600 GT 512MB and would like to ask, would I be better off buying a second card for SLI or upgrading the card?

**Robert Wallace**

**A** A surprising number of people have this idea that doubling the number of graphics cards in their rig means doubling its gaming performance. The technology doesn't work that way, and it's possible you may not notice any change at all.

My experience with using two midrange cards in SLI or CrossFire is that you're better off reconfiguring your system with a single card picked from one or two ranks above. Your rig will be cooler and quieter, and you'll not be so reliant on having the right drivers and the

right game to get the best from your investment. In addition, you won't have two cards to stick on eBay whenever advancing graphics technology leaves them both behind.

However, it's not always so simple. If you're looking to add a second card to a system you already have, there may be some benefit to SLI. Adding a second 8800 GT to partner an existing one can give excellent results – though that's mainly because a GT on its own is a cracker in the first place.

Alas, in your case, pairing another 8600 GT with the one in your box will not result in the frame rate explosion you're expecting. Get the single 8800 GT instead and put your old card up for sale.

## Q STUTTER CRAP

Following many upgrades, I'm still suffering from stuttering during games. It always seems worse at the

If you're buying a PC with a small case, check you can fit big cards in it.



Spend your money on a holiday, not CrossFire cards.



wandy@dearwandy.com @  
dearwandy, pc zone, future publishing, 2 balcombe st, london, nw1 6nw

**"SP3 contains more than 1,000 updates, but it's doubtful you've been inconvenienced by one"**

start and even happens during *Football Manager* match highlights. My specs are: ASUS A8N-VM motherboard (original), with an Athlon 64 X2 4200+, Radeon HD 3850, 2GB RAM and a 700W PSU (all upgrades).

I'm 99 per cent sure all my XP drivers are up-to-date. I run *Defrag*, anti-virus and anti-malware software regularly. I've run the AMD optimiser. I love PC gaming, but all these checks are becoming a bit frustrating when I have a machine capable of playing the latest games.

The stuttering was worse during *Oblivion*, even though I'd reduced the graphics settings. But it happens in almost every game.

**Jason Steel**

**A** When you say your PC is still stuttering, has it always had the problem, despite you upgrading every component bar the motherboard? While a mobo or other hardware problem is likely to show itself as something more catastrophic than stutter, you'd be wise to eliminate it from the list of suspects. Try running your games with half the RAM sticks removed, and make sure you've updated your BIOS. The log files you emailed me suggest it's more than a year out of date.

I'd then disable or remove a lot of the background services you have running. If you create a new Windows user account and use it only for gaming, you won't need any of the anti-this-and-that you have installed, most of which tends to feed paranoia more than it solves problems. AVG, ZoneAlarm and Ad-Aware all hook deep into your system and their regular snooping on what you're doing could exhibit as stutter.

I'd also make sure you've removed all traces of old ATI drivers and have installed the latest set from AMD's website – preferably without that lumbering Catalyst Control Center. There was a serious issue with HD2xxx

and HD3xxx cards which manifested itself as a stutter in 3D games, but the 8.3 driver release supposedly fixed it.

As a last resort, I'd try adding a second hard drive, or partitioning your existing one, and installing a second copy of Windows XP.

### **Q SHORT TROUBLE**

I seem to have made a slight tactical error.

I bought a Dell Inspiron 530S without being made aware that the slim case will only house a half-size (ie low profile) graphics card. It has a Radeon HD 2400XT 256 MB.

I decided to upgrade this card, but after speaking with Dell and raiding the internet I can't find a single product with a better specification.

Do you have any suggestions, apart from dumping the computer? At 63 you would think I would be wiser.

**Dr Colin R Pool**

**A** The fact you've understood the problem, researched it, and composed and sent an email to me puts you far ahead of almost everyone, let alone those in their 60s. My mother is in your bracket, and she moves her mouse by shooing it gingerly as though checking if a hamster is dead.

There are a number of half-size, half-height, low-profile – call them what you will – cards on the market, though they're never going to be very exciting. Enthusiast products are packed with more memory, hotter chips, large diameter coolers, power connectors, not to mention features such as SLI. Simply put, a low-profile card is too small.

You can still find the odd half-decent, half-height product though, such as Sapphire's Radeon HD 3450. It's not going to turn *Crysis* into a ballet so realistic you could call it art, but it is a few strides ahead of the 2400 XT. One thing's for sure: you'll not find a 512MB card that fits in your case. **PC**

**FORUMS:**  
DIRECT FROM  
**DEARWANDY.COM**

(luckless666) I wanted to save my music and pictures but have decided that I'd rather just wipe the hard drive and start over. However, upon booting from Windows XP CD and selecting Install Windows, a Blue Screen of Death appears saying that "A driver corrupted pool memory used for holding pages destined for disk". I've also had another one about a PAGE\_LOOKUP and one when Windows starts. "DRIVER\_IRQL\_NOT\_LESS\_OR\_EQUAL" Any ideas? (Wandy) If you're getting issues when running XP setup, it's a hardware issue. DRIVER\_IRQL\_NOT\_LESS\_OR\_EQUAL is normally drivers but it could be an old PCI on the fritz. Try removing any add-in cards you have.

## **ELEMENTARY LESSONS IN PC TECH...**

Note how the castle tower has been obscured by bloom.



### **04 BLOOM**

Light bloom is a resource-intensive graphical effect applied to computer game images in order to make them appear more lifelike.

The effect works by placing a radiant fringe around the edges of objects between the viewer and a powerful light source – a window when indoors, or the sun when outdoors – to make the contrast between foreground and background more marked.

As with lens flare and motion blur, light bloom is peculiar to the workings of a camera and is not something you would experience simply by looking around you. For that same reason it's also slightly naff.

For example, if you were to take a photo in a dark room on a bright day, the picture would make any window seem incredibly bright. If the curtains are closed, the light seems to 'bloom' around their edges.

In reality, your eye is capable of dealing with the light and dark of outside and inside. So while it might appear to make a game

scene seem realistic, all bloom is really doing is creating a camera's eye view that has no bearing on how you see it yourself.

Of course, it can still look awesome when used in cutscenes and intro sequences, but its addition to first-person shooters is dubious. After all, you're supposed to be looking through the protagonist's eyes, not through a series of glass lenses.

If you are experiencing motion blur when you move your head, lens flare when you stare at lamps and bloom when you look outside on a sunny day, see your GP.



If the world looks like this, you're ill.

# HOW TO... BENCHMARK YOUR PC

## REMEMBER:

Restart your PC before and after you run a benchmark. Run the tests at least three times and use the average as your result. Create a new account free of background services and resource-hungry applications (like Skype).

**NEED:**  
Windows, some games, patience  
**TIME:**  
2-3 Hours  
**DIFFICULTY LEVEL:**



**Phil Wand presents five ways to benchmark your PC**

**M**OST PEOPLE HAVE probably played the original *Counter-Strike* mod for *Half-Life*, if only to see what all the damned fuss was about. When the game was rewritten for Source, a one-click benchmarking mode was included to showcase Valve's new engine and to provide players with an easy way of comparing their PCs' performances. From that day forward, you couldn't move between the pages of community

forums without someone boasting, complaining, or just plain talking about their benchmark results.

If you're a gamer, you need to see how your PC's performance can be affected by resolution and detail level. And if you're spending money, it's vital to

know if the upgrades you bought improved your PC's performance – if not, take them back.

In the following five steps, you'll see how you can use some of the most popular games to rate your machine's gaming abilities.

**"You'll be doing well to get *Crysis* running above 30fps"**

## 01 COUNTER-STRIKE: SOURCE

To run the benchmark, run *Counter-Strike: Source* from your Steam menu, open the Options menu and select a resolution from the drop-down. Now click the Advanced button and make a note of all the detail settings, because you'll need these to replicate the test next time you run it. Return to the main menu and choose Video Stress Test to begin scoring.

**WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT:** *Counter-Strike* is not a demanding game. Most of today's systems are capable of well over 150fps, with high-end rigs hitting an impressive 300fps or more.



## 02 COMPANY OF HEROES

If you're a Steam user, right-click on *COH* in the Steam Games list and select Properties. Click the Launch Options button and type -novsync in the box. Click OK and launch the game.

On the Options menu, select the Graphics tab and configure the resolution detail level, making a note of what you choose. Click the Performance Test button to start benchmarking.

**WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT:** Most PCs will give an average of 40fps or more at standard 17in LCD resolutions. High-end machines will get past 70fps.



Another heroic American parachutes into another benchmark.



## HUH?

Frame rate refers to the number of frames displayed on your computer screen each second.

A **benchmark** is a tool that helps you assess the speed your PC by running a series of tests. No **benchmark** is foolproof, but the same program run on a number of different systems will help you grade their relative performance.

A **synthetic gaming benchmark** is so called because it attempts to determine the effectiveness of your PC in games by merely simulating their effects on your hardware. The most popular **synthetic gaming benchmark** is *3DMark*. The latest version (available from futuremark.com) is no longer free and will only run on *Vista*. Free, earlier versions that run in XP are available at snipurl.com/3dmk.

A **game benchmark** is a test run within the confines of a game itself. The *Windows System Assessment Tool* (or *WinSAT*) is *Vista*'s own benchmark.



## 03 ENEMY TERRITORY: QUAKE WARS

Start a game normally, join as a floating spectator, and press F12 to begin recording once the action heats up. Make sure you capture close-ups of battles as well as more panoramic views of any fighting. Press F12 again to stop. Return to the main menu and click the Replay button. Make a note of the filename you just created, and press **ctrl+alt+`** to bring up the console. Type **timenetdemo** followed by the filename to start the benchmarking process.

**WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT:** Be happy with 40fps or more, though you should be seeing an average of 60fps to make the game feel truly fluid. High-end systems will be getting over 90fps.

Dr. Pain (Laserator) Boris Lightning  
B.I.T. (Minigun) YorkChop  
Brutus (Twin Chainsaw) Bonzer  
Brutus (Laservisor) Mylars  
**3DMarks** (Assault Rifle) CNO Max  
H.I.P. (Tank Gun) Brandon  
**3DMarks** (Assault Rifle) Dr. Pain  
Giga War Shredder

Stopped demo playback at 00:00:00  
2271 frames in 37.3 seconds @ 61.0 fps  
processed 0.005 milliseconds @ 61.0

Roll your own benchmark  
with id's *Doom 3* engine.



## 04 SUPREME COMMANDER

Run the game and make a note of all video settings in the Interface and Video tabs of the Options menu – as with all game benchmarks, you need to be certain you're being consistent.

Quit, go to the game's bin folder and find *supremecommander.exe*; right-click it and choose Create Shortcut. Right-click the shortcut,

select Properties and add **/perf** to the end of the Target edit box. Run the game from this shortcut.

**WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT:** A good gaming PC will get past 12,000, with expensive ones getting above 18,000. Look in the text file made by the benchmark for the frame rate – at 30fps, play will be smooth.



Supreme Commander still looks good at low frame rates.

## 05 CRYYSIS

Both the retail and demo versions of *Crysis* contain a bin32 folder which contains two files, *Benchmark\_GPU.bat* and *Benchmark\_CPU.bat*. Once you've configured the game with the detail settings and resolution you want to score, run both the benchmarks and note down the results. Unlike the other tests here, the *Crysis* benchmarks automatically

run through a number of times to give you a more accurate result.

**WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT:** On medium to high settings on a good gaming PC, you'll be doing well to get *Crysis* running above 30fps. Only those with an HD 3870 X2 or 9800 GTX will be able to crank up the detail and have the game remain remotely playable.



Thankfully Warhead won't hurt your PC as much as *Crysis*.

## QUESTIONS, QUESTIONS!

**Q** Why not just stick to using synthetic benchmarks?

**A** 3DMark is an easy way of comparing the overall performance of different machines, but the scores it produces aren't relevant to games you actually play.

**Q** Is there somewhere I can go to compare benchmark results?

**A** Visit any of the online communities associated with the game you've benchmarked.

**Q** How can I get better scores?

**A** The easiest way is to reduce the resolution and detail. The best way is to buy faster hardware.

**Q** Do I need to set up my video card as well as my game?

**A** You should open your video card's Control Panel and choose 'Let the application decide' in Performance Settings.

**HOT TIP:  
TAKING THE FRAPS**

Most games don't include any way of gauging system performance. But there's a way round this. *Fraps* ([fraps.com](http://fraps.com)) is a small utility that displays the frame rate in the corner of your screen, while you're playing. The idea is that in addition to seeing how fluid your play is, you can also hit the F11 key when you want a benchmark to start and F11 again when you want it to stop. Average frame rate information between those two points is then written to a file on your hard drive. The downside to using *Fraps* in a game with no way of scripting your movements is that how you play will differ each time you run a benchmark, leading to different results each time.

### 3D GAMING

The software which accompanies the Zalman monitor contains a surprisingly long list of games, some of which make sense to play in 3D, and some of which really don't.

None of the titles were developed with an added dimension in mind, so how they appear on screen is down to little more than chance.

For a proper, full-featured 3D game to knock you from your seat, you'll need to wait for someone to write one.



**"To make the jump from 2D to 3D, you install special NVIDIA drivers"**

# TRIMON ZM-M220W

PRICE £374.99 MANUFACTURER Zalman AVAILABLE FROM [quietpc.co.uk](http://quietpc.co.uk)

**T**HE TRIMON ZM-M220W creates the illusion of depth by showing two transposed images which give a 'stereo' view of the world. An invisible mesh on the front of the panel works together with glasses to ensure your eyes see separate images, rather than both together, and your brain does all the rest.

The spectacles are polarised, and are really no bother to wear because they're so ultra lightweight. They don't turn everything blue and red like the anachrome dioptre glasses you used to get in packets of Shreddies and, as with the monitor itself, you would be hard pushed to tell there was anything unique about them.

Given that I can't play *Half-Life 2* – famous for turning people green with motion sickness – without stumbling into the garden, lying on the grass and mumbling feebly at passing ants, reliving

the experience in 3D was never going to be on my things to do before I die list.

### 2D, OR NOT 2D

However, with its stereoscopic party piece switched off in the Control Panel, the 22in ZM-M220W makes a very fine 2D monitor. The image is pleasingly vibrant, and the screen is positionable thanks to its tilting, swivelling, 90° pivoting, height adjustable base. There are VGA and DVI inputs, plus built-in speakers if you want your games to sound like you've just sat on them.

Aside from an unnervingly mirror-like finish to this 1680 x 1050 widescreen LCD, you'd not think there was anything extraordinary about it.

To make the Zalman jump from 2D to 3D, you first install special NVIDIA drivers (ATI owners don't get a look in) and select what you want to play from a drop-down list of around 70 supported

titles encompassing every genre. Then don the supplied spectacles and play.

Games don't pop out at you in the way Zalman's marketing suggests, but they do have perceptible depth. The effect varies between squinting and disappointment and eye-popping terror. *World of Warcraft* sets the standard, the feeling of the game extending away from you being genuinely astonishing. In top-down games like *Supreme Commander*, the HUD and map icons stand out, but in such a way as to make it hard to concentrate on onscreen action. You'd have to spend time getting used to it.

### 3D HEADACHES

My concern is with first-person shooters like *Team Fortress 2* and racing games like *Need for Speed*, where the effect is so subtle as to be pretty much pointless. There's also the odd game – *GTA: San Andreas* leaps to mind – where the

illusion falls apart and all you're left with is a headache.

When you consider the price premium, the way the foreground and background lurch sickeningly if you move your head, and how much lower the frame rate is when the 3D mode is operational, you have to be thankful that the Zalman doubles up as a fully featured 2D monitor. Because that's how you'll use it most.

**PCZONE**  
**81**

Fantastic 3D: sometimes

# VENDETTA 2

PRICE £29 MANUFACTURER OCZ WEBSITE [ocztechnology.com](http://ocztechnology.com)

**A** LONG WITH THE Vanquisher, the original Vendetta was a 92mm cooler for Socket 754/755/939/AM2 and LGA77.

The Vendetta 2 is essentially the same design, with stacked fins encompassing three copper heat pipes that curl round to make direct contact with your processor. Only it's now much bigger – it has to accommodate a new 120mm fan.



**PCZONE**  
**88**



# GEFORCE 9600 GT XXX ALPHA DOG

PRICE £120 MANUFACTURER XFX WEBSITE [xfxforce.co.uk](http://xfxforce.co.uk)

**T**HIS GEFORCE 9600 GT would be a strong contender in any competition to find the graphics card with the silliest title.

While it wouldn't win many awards for Earth-shattering benchmarks, what I can tell you is that it's a marginally better bet than any regular 9600 GT (issue 194, 78%).

The reason is that XFX have been rather brave with the standard clock speeds: the 512MB XXX Beta Gerbil is a variant that is not just noticeably quicker than a stock card, but which in many cases is as fast as an 8800 GT.

**PCZONE**  
**80**

But again I have to ask, why not spend the extra on a fundamentally faster card? XFX's own 8800 GT XXX Delta Hamster Edition is but a fraction slower than a GTS, and yet can be yours for £160. No wonder graphics card buyers are confused.

# STINGER

PRICE £29 MANUFACTURER Cyber Snipa WEBSITE [cybersnipa.com](http://cybersnipa.com)

**I**N ISSUE 180, I made a wish for Cyber Snipa to redesign their excellent S.W.A.T. mouse without the fiddly buttons.

This seems to be it. The Stinger is an exceptionally comfortable laser device aimed at right-handers with big hands. Where your mitts make contact you'll find high-grip surfaces and where the mouse makes contact with the mat you'll find subtly cushioned gliders. These help make the Stinger seem like it's floating on air.



**PCZONE**  
**93**



# GEFORCE 9800GTX

PRICE £235 MANUFACTURER PNY WEBSITE [pnycards.com](http://pnycards.com)

**T**HE 9800 GTX has specs similar to the 8800 GTS, and with 512MB onboard has less memory than the old 8800 Ultra.

Unbolt the cooling apparatus and you'll find the two cards share pretty much the same technology, the end result being that the newcomer's performance is but a neck ahead of the aged 8-series model it replaces. It's also only marginally out in front of a factory-tweaked 8800 GTS, and is larger and more unwieldy to boot.

You do get support for three-way SLI and HybridPower, a way of switching off the card when it's not

needed, but both these features need a compatible motherboard to work. The performance is so similar to the smaller and cheaper GTS means it shouldn't be on any gamer's shortlist. Save your money or get a GX2.

**PCZONE**  
**74**

**REMEMBER:**  
IF YOU SMELL  
SOMETHING  
BURNING - PANIC

Should you wake up of a morning to discover a thin waft of smoke emanating from the roof of your PC, don't shrug and eat toast. It signals that your games and your pornography are in great peril indeed.

# HARDWARE DIVIDE

We see plenty of new gear at **PC ZONE**, but these are the bits we just adore

## LOADED?

### GRAPHICS

#### 9800 GX2

EXPECT TO PAY £370  
MANUFACTURER ASUS

### WEBSITE

[uk.asus.com](http://uk.asus.com)

Pound coins weighing you down? The GX2 is the first card capable of making *Crysis* look like a game rather than a slideshow. While it's matched by two 8800 GT cards in SLI, the flagship 9-Series remains the fastest – and most expensive – single card solution on sale.



#### CORE 2 QUAD EE QX9775

EXPECT TO PAY  
£1,000  
MANUFACTURER  
Intel

### WEB

[intel.co.uk](http://intel.co.uk)

A silly price makes for awesome power and magical performance. Not only will your Extreme Edition chip cost you the same as several entire PCs, but like everything else in your PC it'll be obsolete in two years. If you've got the money, what the hell!



#### SM226BW

EXPECT TO PAY  
£219  
MANUFACTURER  
Samsung

### WEBSITE

[samsung.com/uk](http://samsung.com/uk)

The Samsung SM226BW is handsome and fast – just 2ms grey to grey – and has no hint of the motion sickness that plagued LCDs a few years ago. It produces a bright, evenly lit image that's full of reverberant colours, sharp edges and dark blacks.



#### D975XB2

EXPECT TO PAY  
£155  
MANUFACTURER  
Intel

### WEB

[intel.co.uk](http://intel.co.uk)

### MOTHERBOARD

### SOUND

### BLASTER X-Fi FATALITY FPS

EXPECT TO PAY  
£130

MANUFACTURER  
Creative Labs

### WEBSITE

[uk.europe.creative.com](http://uk.europe.creative.com)

Slightly bonkers soundcard for audiophiles. Supports EAX 5.0, with 64MB X-RAM for top-quality sound effects. CMSS-3D works magic on a stereo signal and makes headphone gaming crystal.



#### WD7500 AAKS

EXPECT TO PAY  
£109  
MANUFACTURER  
Western Digital

### WEB

[wdc.com](http://wdc.com)

Almost as fast as the 150GB Raptor, but with five times the capacity and half the noise. Products like the WD7500AAKS and Hitachi's Deskstar 7K1000 are now so quick that you don't need to be spend extra on 10,000rpm drives. So don't.



#### Z-5500

EXPECT TO PAY  
£195  
MANUFACTURER  
Logitech

### WEBSITE

[www.logitech.co.uk](http://www.logitech.co.uk)

The price has dropped below £200 and these speakers are simply the best we've ever tested. Games and movies ravish your ears, and you'll soon find yourself dusting off from your old CDs just so you can sit in the middle of the sound and revel in it.

## SKINT?

### GRAPHICS

#### GeForce 8800GT

EXPECT TO PAY £142  
MANUFACTURER XFX

### WEBSITE

[XGXforce.com](http://XGXforce.com)

Ladies and gentlemen, the card of the moment. While we've yet to put a retail GeForce 8800 GT against its Radeon opponents, reference benchmarks have shown that the NVIDIA box is the one to buy. Just avoid those fussier model variants that sail close to £200.



#### CORE 2 DUO E2180

EXPECT TO PAY  
£55  
MANUFACTURER  
Intel

### WEB

[intel.co.uk](http://intel.co.uk)

At the budget end of things, it's a tough choice between the E2180, E4500 and E8200. Unsurprisingly, things get faster the more you pay, but the E2180 here is a flexible engine that's great for gentle gaming or an overclocking frenzy.



#### CONROEXFIRE- ESATA2

EXPECT TO PAY  
£60  
MANUFACTURER  
ASRock

### WEB

[asrock.com](http://asrock.com)

Paired with an E6300, this ASRock board can wring high-end performance from a budget rig. It features a 1066/800/533MHz FSB, SATA II with RAID, 7.1 HD audio onboard, CrossFire support, Gigabit LAN and ASRock's easy overclocking features.



#### CAVIAR 1600AAJS SATA-II

EXPECT TO PAY £30  
MANUFACTURER  
Western Digital

### WEBSITE

[www.wdc.com](http://www.wdc.com)

A 160GB hard drive remains more than enough for the casual gamer to do a spot of casual gaming. A few good titles, Steam, a couple of thousand music files and the odd porn flick still leaves plenty of room for Windows to manoeuvre.



#### VA903M

EXPECT TO PAY  
£118  
MANUFACTURER  
ViewSonic

### WEBSITE

[www.viewsonic.co.uk](http://www.viewsonic.co.uk)

The VA903m is a better bet than any of the similarly-priced widescreen variants as there are more pixels on its 19in screen: its 1280 x 1024 pixel panel offers greater depth than the standard 1440 x 900 panels of its peers.



#### SOUND BLASTER AUDIGY 2 VALUE

EXPECT TO PAY  
£20

### MANUFACTURER

Creative Labs

[uk.europe.creative.com](http://uk.europe.creative.com)

The cheap Audigy features EAX 4.0 and Dolby Digital EX support. This card makes an awful lot of sense for casual gamers, as there's little point throwing half a mortgage payment at your soundcard.



#### X-530

EXPECT TO PAY  
£55  
MANUFACTURER  
Logitech

### WEBSITE

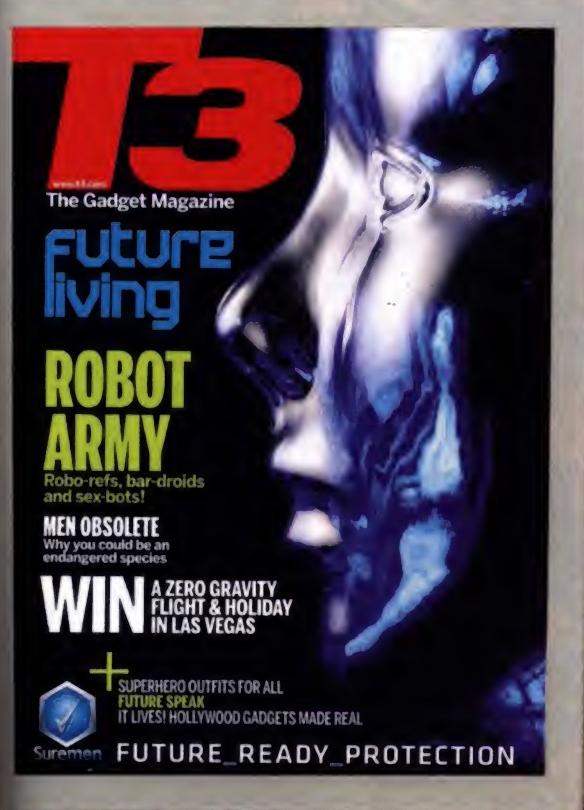
[logitech.co.uk](http://logitech.co.uk)

Logitech's X-530s have the edge on quality and are available everywhere. This Swiss-designed 70W, 5.1 system offers Logitech build quality with superb sound in games, movies and music. And for £55 their value can't be beat.

# Free with this month's issue of T3

# FUTURE living

- \* Robot Armies
- \* Super hero outfits for all
- \* Hollywood gadgets made real
- \* Why you could be an endangered species



Win zero  
gravity flight  
& holiday in  
Las Vegas\*



In association with

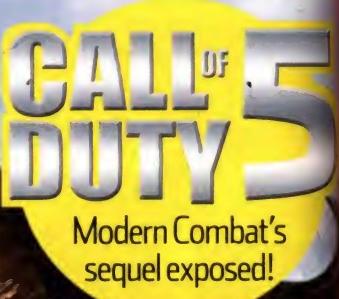


Suremen

FUTURE\_READY\_PROTECTION

\*Design the Future competition and prize is run by and provided entirely by Sure for Men. T3 take no responsibility for entrants

PLAYSTATION 3 MAG  
**PSW**



EXCLUSIVE REVIEW  
**BATTLEFIELD  
BAD COMPANY**

Destroy everything in the shooter to blow COD4 away!

TimeSplitters 4  
Guitar Hero IV  
Resident Evil 5  
Brothers In Arms  
BioShock

EXCLUSIVE **PS3** HANDS-ON  
**TOMB RAIDER  
UNDERWORLD**

World's first playtest! Plot secrets spilled! All-new screens! Unmissable info!



ESSENTIAL PLAYTEST

**RESISTANCE 2**

Hands-on with Sony's 60-player blast!

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GREAT GIFTS**

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Issue 109  
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# PCZONE FREEPLAY



Deliciously free, like air and the sea

## WHAT'S FREE THIS MONTH

**FREE  
GAMES!**

### Lovely Mubbly

**T**HIS MONTH, UNBELIEVABLY, I actually sat down and played a few freeware games during work hours while I took part in the song-and-dance that is fitting everything onto the disc. I rarely get this chance, as Darth Porter waits behind me, demanding I work harder, better and faster every day, but I slipped a laxative in his coffee so I'd have a chance to check out Jesse Venbrux's latest tour-de-force *Mubbly Tower*.

Reviewed in *Freeware* (page 98) this issue it's a physics-based tower defense game and regardless of how terribly bad I am at it, I still found myself losing my lunch hour helping dancing mubblyies protect themselves from the hordes of attacking... things.

This isn't the first time that one of Venbrux's creations has taken my time away, the last two being the brilliant *Frozzd* and the better-still *Karoshi 2.0* and thus when the stalwart Steve Hogarty suggested (and subsequently set up) an interview with Mr Venbrux himself, I jumped at the chance and that's why you'll find a wonderful interview with him on page 97.

You'll also see yet another Tales of Game's Studios classic in the form of a Wu-Tang Clan Roguelike, a packed disc with a demo of *Race Driver: GRID* and our verdict on the brand new *Team Fortress 2* map, *Gold Rush*.

Finally, the new *Indiana Jones* film is absolutely brilliant, and nuts to anyone who disagrees with me. It's clever, beautifully-shot, genuinely enjoyable, and some of the most fun I've had watching a film. I believe that anyone who doesn't like it has let the child inside them die, and only wants to view life and the world through cold, dead eyes. As such, I had nothing to do with this month's back page.

**Ed Zitron**

Ed Zitron, Disc Editor

**PCZONE  
FREE-O-METER**



94

### Demo pages

We're race-crazy with *GRID* and *Trials 2.0*...



97

### News

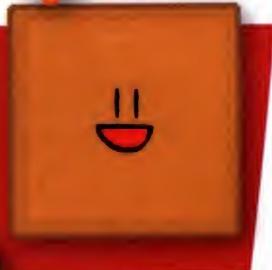
The creator of *Karoshi*, *Mubbly Tower* and *Frozzd* talks to us



98

### Freeware

Steve Hogarty hates money so much he doesn't carry any



100

### Play

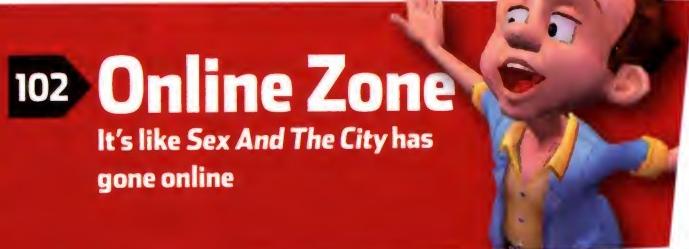
Mimes, twigs, corn, and a rush for gold...



102

### Online Zone

It's like *Sex And The City* has gone online



0  
HOURS

\*Approximate amount of completely free stuff this month



326.3  
HOURS\*



PCZONE

ON THE DVD

Having problems getting something on our DVD to work? Phone our helpline on **01225 442244** and ask for cover disc support. Or email [support@futurenet.co.uk](mailto:support@futurenet.co.uk), including as much information as possible about your system and the nature of your problem.

WEBSITE [racedrivergrid.com](http://racedrivergrid.com)

**I**T'S A RARE joy when even those who aren't car-savvy can enjoy a well-tuned racing game without having to taste the vile bile of failure. Codemasters' *Race Driver: GRID* is an excellent, accessible racer that's ideal for even the most awkward of vehicle-voyeurs. Thanks to the driving assist options and the ability to reverse time to correct failures, doing even reasonably well at this game only requires two hands.

While it's not redefining what it means to be a race driver, *GRID* is a slick, balls-to-the-walls racer that will have you smashing angrily into your opponents and skidding around corners at dangerously high speeds.

That's if you choose to race, as included in this demo is the wonderfully quirky drifting, resplendent with excited



Japanese announcers and some truly gigantic skid marks.

Drifting is tough as nails, but one of the most individual and enjoyable racing experiences we've had in a while, and thankfully Codemasters have included a full level of it for you to plough through – just be prepared to restart a few times

until you get the hang of deliberately driving badly.

Even if you're scared of easy-going racing games, we must insist that you rev your engine for *GRID* – although perhaps not as much as has been shown in recent 'man loves car' documentaries on Five. Still, it's another Codies racing triumph.

**YOU SUCK**

Even with the many driving assists on, it can be difficult for some people (and by "some people," we mostly mean us) not to casually mash their car into the sideline, regardless of how smooth and easy the course is.

**STOP RIGHT NOW**

Luckily you're able to load up instant replays and get to a moment before your inability to handle a car became quite so obvious and freeze the action. Preferably at a point where you're not donutting like a moron.



Crazy drift, serious game.

**HOW TO SAVE YOURSELF FROM ABJECT EMBARRASSMENT****DRIVE FOR SUCCESS**

Ta-dah, you're no longer face down in the mud, but back a few seconds in time – which is just enough to correct your fatally appalling steering, or just plough back into the same ditch, again. Your choice.

**FREEZE FRAME**

This lets you rewind time before you crashed, letting you return to the track like nothing happened, as though your car became possessed by Sam Beckett from *Quantum Leap*, who decided to stop you being so utterly shit.



No scotsmen, though...

# TRIALS 2.0: SECOND EDITION

Leaning back and forth just got dangerous

WEBSITE [redlynxtials.com](http://redlynxtials.com)

**THERE'S LITTLE TO** compare *Trials 2.0: Second Edition* to, which makes the whole process of describing the game rather difficult.

Basically, you play as a motocross biker who must traverse a course, balancing his bike on various unstable obstacles by leaning and accelerating – without falling over or bumping your surprisingly bouncy head against something unyielding.

Each level requires you to get through it as fast as possible with the least amount of faults. In the demo, there are three training levels, a level for each difficulty setting and a special

physics-based level that is an absolute treat, if a little difficult.

*Trials 2.0* got 80% last issue, and you can turn this demo into the full version for a mere \$19 – we totally recommend you do so.



## YOU'LL JUST FLIP OUT!



### FLIP

You need to keep flipping as you go, maintaining balance while setting yourself with enough speed to land correctly.



### DYNAMIC

The dynamic level is made of physics-based objects, making it a rather large, but fun, challenge.

# SAMURAI WARRIORS 2

The choppiest game on the DVD

WEBSITE [koei.com](http://koei.com)

**TERribly CONSOLEy** and blindingly gaudy, screenshots of *Samurai Warriors 2* could put you off it, but we encourage you to ignore that thing we call shame and give this frenetic slasher a ruddy good playthrough.



You'll spend the demo trying to save your soldiers from the evil Nobunaga, as he attempts to kill your generals. If he dies it's over, so pay attention to your map and the ridiculously voiced messages from your comrades.

### 1 Enemy generals

Killing these guys can involve an epic duel that'll have you blocking for your very life.

### 2 Musou

Musou (which is raised by picking up items on the battlefield) lets you sweep several enemies off their feet at once.

### 3 Red blobs

Red blobs on the map are enemy generals and guards, whose murders are your next priority after protecting your own generals.

## HOW TO KILL THE BADDIES



### MITSUHIDE AKECHI

The trick to killing Akechi is charging Musou attacks to keep him off of his feet.



### ODA TOKUGAWA

This guy is slow and awkward, so you can defeat him by dancing around like a psychotic ballerina.

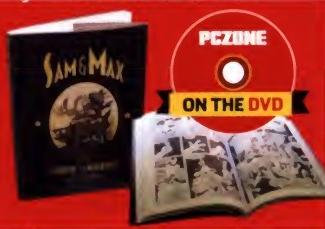
# DISC COMPETITION

That's right, you're reading the words of PC ZONE's very first DVD Zone competition, and you've got the chance to win your very own copy of *Sam & Max: Surfin' The Highway*.

Inside each winning copy is a gorgeous, hand-drawn sketch of manic rabbit Sam, and the signature of *Sam & Max*'s creator Steve Purcell. These were donated by the generous sorts at Telltale Games, and if you miss out on the chance

to win these ones, you can go to [snipurl.com/surfinhighway](http://snipurl.com/surfinhighway) and pick up either a similarly soft-covered version of this tome, or the hard cover edition.

To top it off, to celebrate the end of *Season 2* of the *Sam & Max* point-and-clickers, we've also included a demo of each episode on the disc! Now, get your fine behinds onto the disc to find out how to win one of these awesome prizes...



## BEST OF THE REST



### KUNG FU PANDA

WEBSITE [kungfupanda.com](http://kungfupanda.com)

We've all fought bears in our time, but now we can finally reverse roles and play as a fighting bear. Jump into the furry boots of ursine fighter Po and beat the crap out of all kinds of wildlife, without getting the WWF in a huff.



### SANGO 2

WEBSITE [ezgame.com/Sango2](http://ezgame.com/Sango2)

Somewhere between *Shogun: Total War* and an RPG, *Sango 2* is a bizarre historical strategy game that follows the *Romancing the Three Kingdoms* series. *Sango 2* is an acquired taste, but this demo is a must-try for strategists.



### HALF-LIFE 2 DATA BANK

WEBSITE [half-life-2.com](http://half-life-2.com)

We've collected our favourite mods for *Half-Life 2*, including *Insurgency 2.0*, the awesome urban shooter; *Flipside*, a platformer that travels a sick mind; and *Crystalline*, a puzzler where you control a crystal that moves through space.



### WORLDSHIFT

WEBSITE [worldshift-game.com](http://worldshift-game.com)

This weird-looking RTS has you battling fantasy creatures with guns, as well as the classic staples of wizardry that you'd expect. This is a bizarre but fun game, and you can play it against people all over the world using the demo.

**SNIPPETS****THE TYPING OF THE THREAD**WEBSITE [play-typewriter.com](http://play-typewriter.com)

If you're the competitive type, you can now enjoy the challenge of typing words on a timer against other players to see who is the fastest typist on the internet. Gaming just hit its zenith.

**PRECISION JUMPING**WEBSITE [snipurl.com/precision](http://snipurl.com/precision)

Freeware gaming superstar Cactus has released a free-running platformer game that gives you no control of your character in the air, making each jump a question of controlling your velocity on the ground. Don't fall and die!

**TASTE THE PORTAL!**WEBSITE [steainpowered.com](http://steainpowered.com)

For free, right now, anyone with a Steam account can pick up *Portal First Slice*, the first 11 levels of Valve's fantastic puzzler. The cake jokes may be a little old by now though.

# AIN'T NOTHING TO FUDGE WITH

**Barkley Shut Up And Jam Gaiden turns hip-hop**WEBSITE [snipurl.com/wutang](http://snipurl.com/wutang)

**W**HEN WE PLAYED *Shut Up And Jam Gaiden* in issue 193, we hoped that the

Tales of Game's Studios would come up with yet another bizarre classic.

Now they've released a Roguelike (a top-down 2D RPG with a text interface and lots of statistics) built on the fictional tale of famous hip-hoppers The Wu-Tang Clan finding a baby outside their mansion. When said baby is then kidnapped from their care by Cheese Panda XD, a henchman working for an evil wizard, the Clan sets out on a wild adventure into the sewers.

*The Sewer Goblet – The Wu-Tang Clan and the Wu-Tang Baby* plays like a cross between '80s RPGs and desktop time waster *Star Wars: Yoda Stories*, with you endlessly bumping into enemies to cause damage, descending deeper into the sewers to try and save the Wu-Tang Baby from the wizard.

Each member of the Wu-Tang has different abilities – such as the GZA's fire

They bomb atomatically, Socrates' philosophies.



The Wu-Tang Clan: Yeah!

attacks and Ghostface Killah's baseball bat prowess – and if you can get past the bizarre source material, it's a lot of fun.

*The Sewer Goblet* is a thrilling tale of deceit and treachery, with dwarves,

magic, and a hip-hop midi symphony which we fully endorse. But we can't help wondering how much whoop-ass the Wu-Tangs would give the developers if (when) they fail to get the joke.

As the world turns, they spread like germs.



The saga continues...



Nice bling there.



Method Man: And he's got a mysterious pendant.

# BROWSER TOWN

**Enter the world of *Ikariam*, a society trapped in your browser**WEBSITE [ikariam.org](http://ikariam.org)

**BIZARRELY ENOUGH, PEOPLE** are making games these days that aren't cloned FPSs or *The Sims* expansions. One of these is *Ikariam*, a game that plays like *Civilization* bred with *EVE Online*. Players each found a town on a server and must organise buildings over a strip of land while collecting resources to build – you guessed it – more buildings and feed more troops.

The complexity of *Ikariam* comes from the fact your city is on the same

island as other players, so you can either forge alliances with them, mutually assuring destruction to any threats, or bumble into their town for some looting.

*Ikariam* is frustrating in the beginning, as many things can take minutes to build and thus learning your place in the world takes even longer. However, go to the Wikikariam ([snipurl.com/ikariam](http://snipurl.com/ikariam)) and do a little reading and the game opens up, especially if you can establish a good, healthy alliance.

You also have to trade to advance in the game, as each island has one luxury resource, demanding you socialise to get ahead. You can also opt to pay real money for Ambrosia, which allows you to buy week-long bonuses to your production, or get an *Ikariam Plus* account, which gives you a more broad overview of the facets of your town.

*Ikariam* is complex but painfully addictive, and what's more you can play it on anything that uses Flash.



The Island, no Losties included.



Acid rave production – 10 per cent increase.

# FREWARE GOD SPEAKS

We pin down Jesse Venbrux – the man behind the Mubblyes

WEBSITE [venbrux.com](http://venbrux.com)

**Q** How did you become interested in making freeware games?

**A** About five years ago I started making games. I didn't become interested through freeware games and knew very little when I began. When I was much younger I was already drawing levels on paper, so I had enough ideas to start with – it came naturally.

**Would we see a wider variety of freeware games if Game Maker ([yogames.com/make](http://yogames.com/make)) and Adventure Game Studio ([adventuregamestudio.co.uk](http://adventuregamestudio.co.uk)) weren't so depended upon?**

Actually, it's because of tools like these that there is a wide variety. I can't think of a much easier way than Game Maker. There are limitations, but I can make any 2D game I want.

**What was the thought process behind Karoshi 2.0?**

Before I made Karoshi I played a very cruel platform game and noticed that getting killed felt rewarding, mostly because of the visual and sound effects. So I got the idea for a game in which killing yourself would be the goal. It sounded fun (and still does) because it is so opposite from what you usually do. The first Karoshi game begins very



Frozzd is a freeware triumph.



straightforwardly with logic puzzles, but I started throwing in some weird unexpected ideas for fun. Karoshi 2.0 is filled even more with wacky levels.

**Were there any levels that you didn't use because they were too obscure for players?**

For one level I set up an e-mail account that replied to messages with a password to solve the puzzle. Another one required you to quit the game and then restart it. I left these out because I didn't want players to become too frustrated. People do get stuck a lot, such is the nature of the game.

**How long did it take to design Frozzd?**

About five weeks. Never before have I worked as hard on a game, but the pressure of the competition it was made for (and its deadline) really made me focus. Sometimes I had to come up with

good decisions quickly, where usually I would just let the idea rest for a week. I also kept raising the bar for myself and I think I have learned many things from that process.

At the end I did slack off because I was getting sick of my own game, and that is why the final battle is a bit unbalanced.

**Why do some indie developers charge money for their games, whereas designers such as yourself don't?**

I think some people see they are really good at it and figure they can make some money. It's a good reward for all the work you put in.

I have not considered this before, because I think I wouldn't enjoy making such a high-quality game. In short, it's just so much work, and I would probably want to start something new when halfway there.

## MOVIE OF THE MONTH

### PROJECT ORIGIN

Go with our Project Origin preview we've brought you yet another video of the game, this time showing you the disgusting Abomination climbing on tables, screaming at things and savaging the face of anyone who dares come near it.



The stealthy Abomination is a far cry from PO's gun-toting enemies.



And he's got plenty of screws loose. Psychologically that is.



He's also completely ga-ga for pilates...



...and for smashing up lab equipment – the vandal.

## SNIPPETS



### EXECUTED!

WEBSITE [snipurl.com/excut](http://snipurl.com/excut)

Jesse Venbrux has released another fine little game called *Execution*, that is over in a few minutes but is rather twisted and utterly scary. Where will you shoot the terrified victim?



### BEYOND MISSILE COMMAND

WEBSITE [snipurl.com/missilecommand](http://snipurl.com/missilecommand)

This natty little freeware game is an addictive action puzzler that has you working out ways to jump to avoid missiles, tricking them into blowing each other up. Give it a try – it gets fiendishly hard.

## Bug-Fix of the Month

THIS MONTH  
THE SIMS 2:  
FREETIME



"Child Sims will no longer pop when asked to 'Clean Up' the juice tray."





Freeware is dedicated to bringing you the best free games content the internet has to offer. So dedicated are we, that to deliver less than absolute perfection would cause us to choke on our own shame-inspired vomit. This month, flee from asteroid-derived extinction, drink blood while fighting off sock puppets, build a tower and stop smiley faces from knocking it down, rediscover voxels, fight giant OS robots and click on ninjas.



### FANTASTIC BLOOD BOY

**DEVELOPER** Gustav kilman  
**WEBSITE** [snipurl.com/bloodboy](http://snipurl.com/bloodboy)

**WITH A LATE** entry into the The Video Game Name Generator Competition ([tigsource.com/features/vng](http://tigsource.com/features/vng)) *Fantastic Blood Boy's* developer is seemingly the master of taking a randomly suggested idea (in this case the notion of a blood-obsessed superhero) and running with it. You play *Fantastic Blood Boy*, protector of the Clot, a crystal which spews out weapons for Blood Boy to use against the evil Sockpuppets.

Collect the Sockpuppets' blood to win, but don't let the Clot fall into their hands. Every so often a phantom will appear (the manifestation of the spirits of dead Sockpuppets) and attempt to cage you, leaving the Clot undefended.

All this madness from three words thrown out by a random name generator, and there's even amazing intro screen artwork of the *Fantastic Blood Boy* himself.

# Freeware



**Steve Hogarty** haggles his way into oblivion

## DINO RUN

**Putting off the inevitable**

**DEVELOPER** Pixel Jam **WEBSITE** [pixeljam.com/dinorun](http://pixeljam.com/dinorun)

**I**'VE YET TO come across a dinosaur game I haven't liked. Arcade beat-'em-up *Cadillacs and Dinosaurs*? Ace. That *Jurassic Park* game on the SNES? Superb. *Dino Crisis* on the original PlayStation? Inarguably perfect in every way, thanks to a marauding T-Rex who'd chase you through the game and burst through every window. But the best dinosaur games are, as ever, on PC (probably, I mean, I don't put much research or thought into anything I say or do).

Not four months back we had *Off-Road Velociraptor Safari* ([raptorsafari.com](http://raptorsafari.com)) occupying this space and that very same developer, Flashbang, is now working on the fantastic looking *Jetpack Brontosaurus* (play the alpha version at [jetpackbrontosaurus.com/alpha](http://jetpackbrontosaurus.com/alpha)), a game I seriously believe might change the rules of gaming forever.

So here's *Dino Run*, a flash game which happily confirms my theory that dinosaurs equal greatness. You're a dinosaur (a sort of raptor, by the looks of things, but a small one it seems) whose peaceful existence is interrupted by a cataclysmic meteor impact which sends out a ripple of

Piggy back on bigger dinos.



doom across the world. With this wall of destruction tearing across the map from left to right, you've no choice other than to run, leaping over obstacles, ducking under others, grabbing eggs, collecting bones, and scoffing smaller creatures and odd glowing things for speed bonuses, hitching rides with equally panicked pterodactyls and avoiding the larger

dinosaurs as they madly flee (or rather, saunter slowly away).

That gameplay in itself is pleasing enough, but what will strike you most is the graphical style, a pixelated world filled with incredible detail. You'll be sprinting past most of it, but the glimpses you get – the chance shortcut through a cave dotted with stegosaur skeletons, the rock pools and tiny creatures – are as charming as they are wonderfully rendered. *Dino Run* includes an online mode in which races can be organised too, and an account can be created to save your stats and times.

If you hadn't noticed, the dinosaurs are all dead these days, so seeing them flee from their own inevitable extinction in *Dino Run* feels futile and almost sad. But they run anyway, fuelled by reptilian desperation and delicious little mammals.

Watch out dino! The Apocalypse is afoot!



'Doom Surf' for bonus points.



# VOXELSTEIN 3D

## Pixel Hitlers

DEVELOPER Volumetric Pixel WEBSITE voxelstein3d.sourceforge.net

**VOXELES** WERE IN vogue back in 1990-something, when some tearaway developers decided that using volumetric pixels instead of polygons would be a far less expensive way of rendering 3D graphics. Today except for a few stubborn rebels developers have turned their backs on these tiny



This game is slightly offensive.

cubes and polygons now reign supreme in the CGI world.

*Voxelstein 3D* is a *Wolfenstein 3D*-inspired demo of a game rendered entirely in voxels. The fact that voxels are all destructable even inspires an introduction in which you must chip away at the bars of your prison cell to escape – something the polygon-based games of today would have a hard time doing, funny enough. In fact, the developers claim everything in the game's levels can be damaged or destroyed.

If you know what a voxel is, chances are you're damp with anticipation already, so boot up that DVD, you voxel-loving madman.

# MUBBLY TOWER

## Walk the line

DEVELOPER Jesse Venbrux WEBSITE snipurl.com/mubblytower

**HAVING INVENTED THE imperilled Mubbly folk in his previous game (*Frozzd*, issue 192) Jesse Venbrux has gone on to create the epic tale of their humble beginnings, in what is essentially a freeform tower defence game. Using randomly assigned shapes of building blocks, you must build and maintain a tower tall enough to properly celebrate the formation of the Mubbly Kingdom – a feat which pleases the Mubbly King, as well as the nearby Wobbly Kingdom, whose primary interest happens to be knocking over towers.**

Spend money on archers and spearmen Mubbles to protect your tower by placing them at strategic points (I say strategic, but really,

anywhere will do), and defend from the constant attacking force of the Wobblies, who'll roll into, fly into, suicide bomb into, or kick



up gusts of winds at your physics-enabled tower.

The best part is the look of absolute joy on the faces of the Wobblies, Mubbles and the building blocks, in spite of the horrific violence and war erupting all around them. They sit in constant glee regardless of how miserable their world is, just like the staff of PC ZONE. Oh, Mubbles, you understand us better than we do ourselves.



# BOOTFIGHTER WINDOM XP SP-2

## It's got robots in, yes sir

DEVELOPER Y. Kamada WEBSITE mirrormoon.org/projects/windom

**FIRST, SOME BASIC** info. *Gundam* is a mad robot cartoon enjoyed by people who touch themselves when they see cartoon schoolgirls and *Windows* is a thing inside your PC what makes a mouse cursor appear on the screen. What you get when you join these two things together is *Bootfighter*, a



Woo! 1,200!

Japanese freeware game in which every PC-based operating system is represented by a 50ft robot, primed to do battle in and above a metropolis.

I won't lie, *Bootfighter* is as weird as hell, but oddly entertaining once you find the button that launches a barrage of missiles at your opponent.



Fight it up!

## WEBGAME OF THE MONTH



### BOWJA THE NINJA

DEVELOPER Pencilkids  
WEBSITE snipurl.com/bowja

**THIS IS ONE** of those click-the-objects-in-the-right-order-to-progress sort of adventure puzzle games, part of a spectrum of games I tend to ignore unless they're either hilariously funny or beautifully illustrated. *Bowja the Ninja* is the latter, a really nicely drawn title which sees Bowja, a ninja armed with a bow and arrow, fight his way past a team of what I've guessed to be technoninjas (I never read the intro text).

'Fight' is the wrong word though, as you'll spend more time distracting them by firing arrows at the correct bit of scenery on the screen.

Unlike some of its peers, *Bowja the Ninja* isn't complex beyond the point of enjoyment. Nor is it that long either. But while it lasts it's a simple, pleasing adventure.





# TEAM FORTRESS 2: GOLD RUSH

Finally, the *TF2* update we've all been waiting for...

WEBSITE [steampowered.com](http://steampowered.com) UPDATE FOR *Team Fortress 2*

**I**T ISN'T OFTEN that there's an excited countdown to the release of an extra map, but this is *Team Fortress 2* we're talking about.

What's more, *Gold Rush* has proved to be the most interesting update so far.

In what is effectively a new game mode, the attackers must move a bomb-laden mine cart along a series of tracks towards the enemy base by crowding around it and shooting any defenders

that come near. Along the way, they can move it through checkpoints, giving them closer respawns to the action and eventually push it into the enemy's base, winning the game.

Meanwhile, the defenders must kill any attackers near the bomb, defending it long enough to win by default or to move it (painfully slowly) backwards towards the attackers' base, in order to blow it up. This is more difficult than it sounds, as the damn thing moves faster when more attackers are near it.

*Gold Rush* is a great deal of fun, even at present, when it could do with a few small tweaks, such as slightly shorter respawn times and closer respawn points for defenders. The bomb's movement and track placement naturally leads to some wonderful choke points that will have you screaming with frustration or elation, depending on how good you are.

This game mode requires a different attitude than other maps, as it's hard to constantly guard the bomb as you would a checkpoint, what with Heavies being such slow, bumbling oafs. We found ourselves switching classes a lot more than we usually would to move with the flow – the action is ever-changing and roles have to progress a little more dynamically than usual.

Then again, what breed of moron would you have to be to complain about a free map and game mode from Valve? Their ongoing commitment and support to their product is admirable, and justifies the dreamy eyed love we have for them. All we need now are soft toys or action figures based on the classes and we'll be in *TF2* Nirvana.



# A CORNY VOYAGE

## Yellow Rocketing

WEBSITE [deleicht.dk/acornvoyage](http://deleicht.dk/acornvoyage) MOD FOR Half-Life 2

**FROM THE MAKERS** of puzzler *Box Bob* (issue 194), *A Corny Voyage* is a weird, fast-paced racing game in which you speed along the inside of some bodily tubes. Moving the mouse, you have to manoeuvre a toothy piece

Could use some Rennies.

of corn past blocks of detritus without bumping into any of it, which will send you flying backwards and loose you valuable seconds.

The trick is to keep going until you hit the colourful membranes which restore valuable energy (shown on the bottom of your screen as a series of blue blocks). These blocks also deplete if you hit anything inside these fleshy tubes, so be very, very careful.

This is a weird little game and doesn't take a great deal of time to complete, but the dreamy music and lovely graphical touches – like the moist reflection of the tubes – makes it a wholly digestible experience.



Ah, to be a piece of corn.

# ETHER

## Turning on the Twig

WEBSITE [brownedyedhotel.com](http://brownedyedhotel.com) MOD FOR Half-Life 2

**ETHER IS A** conceptual mod that shows the Source engine can still be exploited in new and beautiful ways.

*Ether* has you playing a strange being with a twig and weird onscreen twig-framed tunnel vision that sometimes gets in the way. You have to traverse a series of gaps by taking objects, throwing them, making them float upwards, then turning them into solid platforms, all using your mouse button and a few clicks. The levels themselves are rather samey, but as a concept *Ether* has potential to mature into a full-blown

game on the scale of the internet's favourite game, *Portal*.

Where the inherent twigginess comes from though, is anyone's guess.

Use... the tree.



*Ether* is stunning.



# IT'S MIME TIME!

## No mime like the present

WEBSITE [itsmimetimelive.com](http://itsmimetimelive.com) MOD FOR Half-Life 2

**IT'S MIME TIME!** was created by students in Denmark who collaborated over the internet. This is a puzzler that has you traversing invisible walls to do tricks for money. The mod will have you climbing an invisible ladder, lifting invisible weights, or following a man reading the newspaper while copying his movements, resplendent with cartoon music and aloof gestures.

You complete mime tricks by pressing combinations of WADS and the arrow keys, hoping to gain the largest

amount of cash before the time runs out, while also trying to work out where the invisible walls are.

*It's Mime Time!* looks, sounds, and feels like a cartoon, and it's virtually bugless – a remarkable feat for any full-priced game we see these days, let alone a mod. The textures are colourful, the sounds are perfect, and the original gameplay is fun. We say this unashamedly – *It's Mime Time!* is the most fun we've had playing a mod in months. Excellent work, Denmark!



As you can see in our Notes from the Forum PC ZONE's forums were ablaze with discussion about sex and how it should be all over videogames this month. Other highlights were Log talking about the fun of losing clothing and swearing; the team discussing which games they love being bitch-slapped by; a servitor of the gaming gods speaking to us; and we had fun with guns and a mine cart. Hooray!

## ON THE BLOG

**EVER WITH A** nose for controversy, this month saw Zitron write a short treatise on his thoughts on DRM. It was a response to the shitstorm that formed after his review of *Mass Effect* and BioWare's anti-piracy precautions. This was a serious blog for once, and certainly more mature than the one where we proudly pointed in the direction of Log's story about how he got locked out of his house without his trousers.

Elsewhere, Log had a brief ponder over *Penny Arcade Adventures'* excellent use of cuss words, while young Ed also revealed himself to be the dirty cheating scum we've always suspected him to be.

We urge you to check out [pczone.co.uk](http://pczone.co.uk) and take a gander at our semi-regular words, then spread your comments on them like a fine butter.



Cheetahs never prosper.

# Online Zone

Can't wait for the next *PC ZONE*? Don't panic! Just visit [pczone.co.uk](http://pczone.co.uk) now for up-to-the-minute news, exclusive features, forums, special competitions, pubcasts, Fight Club news, online chats and the *PC ZONE* blog!

## NOTES FROM THE FORUM

### It's business time

I've played many games which have romance, and I enjoy this. In games where there can be lengthy stories it's an ideal opportunity to feature romance, but also the most drastic behaviour of love, the physical side.



Dance for me Larry, dance!

Sex is everywhere in movies, so there really is no reason why it shouldn't feature in games, especially where in a game it can be built into the game as a game mechanic, where characters can have children as in upcoming *Fable 2*.

Now that games have adult mature storylines and portray all sorts of interaction between people easily in graphical form, even facial expressions are now becoming standard, isn't it time developers started making hay as well as corpses?

Jonny\_P66

Absolutely, games have enough of a mature audience for it to be worthwhile. However, I don't think now is the right time.

*Mass Effect* shows that the average person isn't ready for videogame sex, even when it's subtle and restrained. They just aren't prepared to listen to facts, despite the fact that there's much more sexually orientated games kicking about if you

want to look (*Lara Croft*, *Virtually Jenna* and stuff like them).

Even *Fahrenheit* managed to be really, surprisingly explicit. The key difference is that because it was obviously done so well, it managed to fit into the game well enough for nobody to draw massive attention to it, thus it got no media coverage. I can't help but feel that if the same scenes were placed in *Halo* (or some other game of that ilk) then it would have received a much bigger reaction.

ArchieUK

I'd depend on the game's story and the necessity of having such things. Meanwhile, try *Jilly Cooper's books*.

safari\_jim[UKMD]

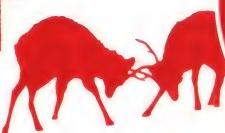
Considering how much gratuitous violence there is in video games, I don't see why there can't be more sex in them too. I never think of sex as gratuitous and like it cheap and sleazy, so I don't mind if it has nothing to do with the plot or gameplay.

Sturdygurdy

## SUPERTEST THE HARSHEST MISTRESS

PC ZONE's most painful gaming vices...

# FIGHT CLUB



COME AND TAKE ON THE ZONE STAFF IN OUR MONTHLY ONLINE GAMING FREE-FOR-ALL!

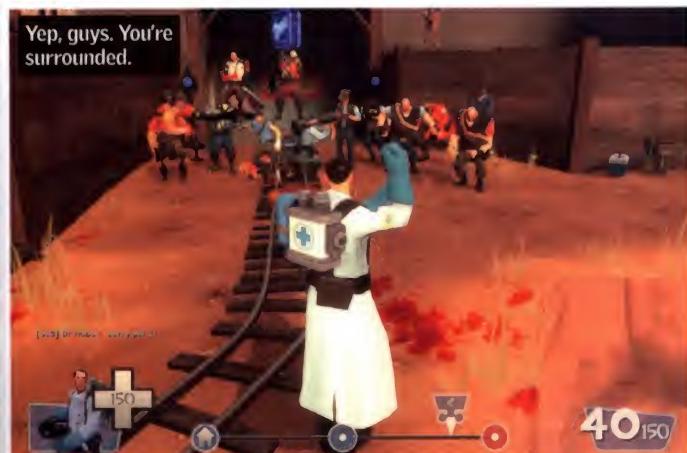
## We've struck GOLD, everybody!

**WHAT AN ABSOLUTE** nightmare. This month's Fight Club had the dissonant edge of a new map that none of us had any practice at, leading to the most disastrous of things - readers cheating, in the form of constantly killing us. We never thought we'd see the day.

Nevertheless, we embarked upon the new Gold Rush map, which barring some possible balancing issues is a lot of fun for both staffers and readers alike, including Heavy-master Darth Careful, and the eager-eyed medic Quite Rob, who kept annoying us all to help him win a few achievements.

There were a few new faces too, who taught us that some people out there really do say "Cry more noob!" in a completely non-ironic fashion. We're going out on a limb here, but anyone who believes these phrases are necessary in spoken communication is a little out of touch. And we're totally not noobs either by the way.

Keep an eye on the Steam Community group for when next month's Fight Club will be - we look forward to puniting you then!



## CAN'T MAKE FIGHT CLUB?

If you can't make it to Fight Club - perhaps you're too busy picking flowers, you big girly-man - then join other PCZ readers on the following public servers. Who knows - some of us might even be there. The latest info can be found at [pczone.co.uk](http://pczone.co.uk).

### WHO'S WHO

Ed Zitron PCZ\_EdZed  
Jamie Sefton PCZ\_NorthernScum  
Jon Blyth PCZ\_Log  
Phil Wand PCZ\_People's Front Of Judea  
Steve Hogarty PCZ\_escaped\_monkey  
Will Porter PCZ\_Batsphinx

### 1 COUNTER-STRIKE: SOURCE

[cs.zonegames.co.uk:270145](http://cs.zonegames.co.uk:270145)

### 2 HALF-LIFE 2: DEATHMATCH

[hl2.zonegames.co.uk:27065](http://hl2.zonegames.co.uk:27065)

### 3 DAY OF DEFEAT: SOURCE

[dod.zonegames.co.uk:27085](http://dod.zonegames.co.uk:27085)

### 4 TEAM FORTRESS CLASSIC

[tfc.zonegames.co.uk:27045](http://tfc.zonegames.co.uk:27045)

### 5 ENEMY TERRITORY: QUAKE WARS

[pczone2.jolt.co.uk](http://pczone2.jolt.co.uk)

### 6 CALL OF DUTY 4

Coming soon

### 7 BATTLEFIELD 2142

[bf2142.zonegames.co.uk:16567](http://bf2142.zonegames.co.uk:16567)

### 8 TEAM FORTRESS 2

[pczone2.jolt.co.uk:27115](http://pczone2.jolt.co.uk:27115)

[pczone2.jolt.co.uk:27125](http://pczone2.jolt.co.uk:27125)

[pczone2.jolt.co.uk:27135](http://pczone2.jolt.co.uk:27135)

**T**HIS MONTH'S SUPERTEST was dedicated to the games that make us want to tear our faces off with anger - that still make us return to them, knowing we're going to taste a big cake of pain.

Steve naturally waffled on about how he's been playing *Trials 2.0: Second Edition* while screaming and shouting at

the screen, but hastily denying that he gets angry at *World of Warcraft*, which is something we all know to be patently untrue. We all lamented how we each quit *WOW* at least twice, but gone back to play a new character to level 40, only to give up and salvage our sanity.

Before long, Will admitted he'd screamed bloody murder at Crytek's

*Far Cry*, which prompted fond memories of Jamie Sefton's frustration at anything with a difficulty level of any shape or form. How we all laughed at the thought of his big, red, puffy, ranting face.

The Supertest has been lovingly draped over certain areas of the DVD, so listen to it and give us your opinions at the forums at [pczone.co.uk](http://pczone.co.uk).



## ZONE CHAT

### Inter-tinnitus



But who is the Valve man? And why is he naked?

### How to join in!

To be a part of next month's ZONE Chat, join our Steam Community group: PC ZONE (PCZ). If you don't have Steam, first be ashamed of yourself, and then download it from [steampowered.com](http://steampowered.com). Keep an eye out for announcements at our forums at [pczone.co.uk](http://pczone.co.uk) for the date of the next chat event...



Log is a harsh mistress.

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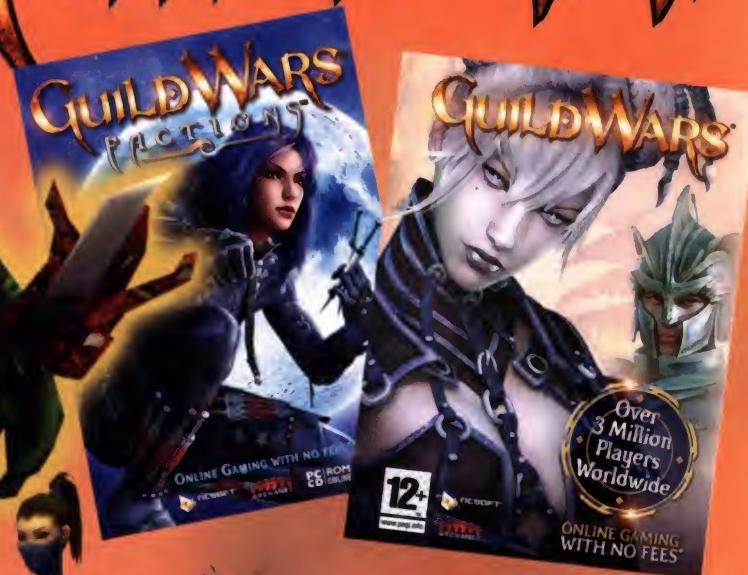
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"In these days of credit card-demanding MMOs it's no wonder that the fee-less wonder that is *Guild Wars* thrives on. As such, we're shackling copies of *Prophecies* and *Factions*, the first two entries in the *Guild Wars* saga, to our already cost-effective subscription deal. Until *Guild Wars 2*'s release there's no other free-to-play MMO that cuts the mustard as much as ArenaNet's classic – a game that shows you don't have to keep paying out to goblin-creators every month. And you also get a kick-ass edition of *PC ZONE* every month as well. I am contractually obliged to say this, but it's true."

Will Porter, Editor

# Retro Zone

Facing the wrong way since 1995...

**Flashback  
of the Month**

## But how?

There's no emulation, trickery, or confusion here – Retro Remakes features mainly standalone projects that you can download, unpack and run immediately.

There're hundreds of projects with only a few duplicates, so if you're of the nostalgic age (which is currently 26, although there are plans to allow younger people to become nostalgic in the future), then there'll be something in here you can remember. And even if you can't – play it anyway. Because this, to quote one of the more annoying lines from *Spaced*, is the good shit.

### retromakes.com

An entertaining blog, and a good resource for finding some first-rate remakes of classic games (and some not-so-classics).

### retrospec.sgn.net

Another great site for finding remakes of old titles.

We can rebuild him....

## RETRO REMAKES

**T**HE PROBLEM WITH nostalgia – apart from the fact you spend your life facing the wrong direction – is that it diddles with your memories. We saw it with *Tomb Raider: Anniversary*, when we were half-convinced that that's what the original looked like. And we noticed it again with *Grand Theft Auto IV* – we had to go back and look at the shocking cuboid hedgerows of *San Andreas* just to remind ourselves that new Liberty City was, in fact, an improvement.

The Retro Remakes website ([retromakes.com](http://retromakes.com)) does for retro gaming what glamour magazines do for the mottled flesh of Madonna. They take what once was natural and pleasant, and make it less jarring for the public, who don't want or need to know the hideous truth.

Modernisation isn't the only thing they do – some of their projects are polished copies, trying to emulate the original as closely as is possible with only love to replace access to the

original code. Others aren't much more than interactive fan fictions – *Dizzy's Bad Day* is a peculiar blend of *Cooker's Bad Fur Day* and *Pyjamarama*, headed by Codemasters' original egg-y mascot. This was also made before Codies introduced guidelines about acceptable content in fanworks, which explains the massive tartan dildo. There was also a competition a year back to make the fake games featured in the spoof '80s educational show *Look Around You* –

this spawned excellent games such as *Pongo* and *Horsefight Simulator*.

The last category, which includes excellent remakes of *Head Over Heels* and Ultimate's isometric *Alien 8*, is the remake-stroke-upgrade. This is what nostalgia should be about – not banging on in forums about how everything's shit now. Retro Remakes is taking the past, making it better, and having a massive sense of humour about the whole thing.



The official remake is available on the 360 – for money. Pah!



Rock-hard platforming at its most annoying.

## Six of the best

Featured remakes from the Retro Remake vaults...



### HEAD OVER HEELS

Single-player co-op play with a dog that likes sitting on a cat's head. Prince Charles plays a baddy.



### PROJECT PARANDROID

Take control of robots with a cool minigame. *Parandroid* is a good game, and you'll end up playing it a lot.



### 3D ANT ATTACK

The first whiff of isometric terror, this remake is a bit less terrifying but just as exciting.



### KLASS OF 99

Remake of *Skool Daze*, the ZX Spectrum's forerunner to *Canis Canem Edit*. Or *Bully*, as the world calls it.



### STOP THE EXPRESS

Awesome upgrade of the surprisingly replayable Spectrum game, coming 21 years after the original.



### PSSST!

One of the few games that would run on a 16K Spectrum, *PSSST!* has you spraying bugs in a garden.



## Now & Then

# LEGO INDIANA JONES vs A PILE OF LEGO



**IF YOU'RE GOING** for real nostalgia, then you have to take your rose tinted glasses off, and put your head inside a pink cardboard box. You might look like a camp robot, but hey – C-3PO, Twiki, Nono, Metal Mickey – the past is chock full of effeminate androids, and the past is where it's at.

So how does *LEGO Indiana Jones* compare to an actual pile of '80s LEGO? With LEGO Indy, you're likely to spend a lot of time saying things like "isn't it clever how they get them to look like the real people, but in LEGO?" or "I really must buy some LEGO, it's probably just as much fun as this". So you'll alt-tab to the internet and buy five bucketfuls of bricks. Two weeks later you'll have a foot-long stack of six-by-two bricks with a tree on top, and you'll know never to let nostalgia ever slip into the pre-videogames era again.

**PCZONE****ON THE DVD**

## Play it!

Play with LEGO without actually playing with LEGO

**1** If you really want to build stuff out of real blocks, then the *LEGO Digital Designer* gives you access to a palette of 763 different kinds of brick.

**2** To play around in that, go to [ldd.lego.com](http://ldd.lego.com) and download the design suite. We say "suite" because it's the kind of word that goes after "design".

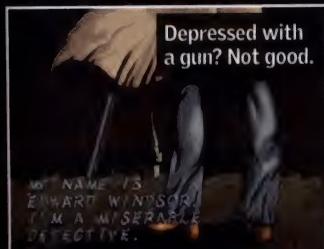
**3** LDD lets you order the bricks and make your work at home: a great feature ruined by the fact that we couldn't make shit for toffee.

**4** A few days later, you'll receive all the bricks you need to make a real-life pile of randomly-placed crap. What are you waiting for?

# Mameframe ZOMBIE RAID

**T**HERE'S A LOT OF talk about Valve's upcoming *Left 4 Dead* being the first zombie co-operative multiplayer game. That might not be the exact category in which it's a first, but it does provide us with a tenuous-enough reason to talk about 1995 light gun adventure *Zombie Raid*, which – as you might have gathered – is a co-operative multiplayer light gun game, in which you shoot zombies.

But it's not all zombies! There are also some terribly-drawn werewolves and a spooky gravestone that has your name on it! This would be terrifying, if I hadn't entered my name as BUM. Instead, it just felt like I'd stumbled across the gravestone of someone's severed buttock.



Depressed with a gun? Not good.

In any event, you're much better off playing *The Typing Of The Dead* – if there's one thing that MAME does worse than trackball games, it's light gun games.

Besides, there's nothing better than blowing a zombie's head off by speedily typing the word Daffodil.



Nice abs – shame about the massive face.

## What is MAME?

MAME is the *Multiple Arcade Machine Emulator*, currently emulating over 3,500 games. You can download it from [www.mame.net](http://www.mame.net) – use *Mame32* for a nice front-end. Then you can download *Robby Roto*, which is legal.



## Back in the day



What an intro...

## Pooslice

By Will Porter

I can isolate the single element of *Syndicate Wars* that made me fall in love with it with pinpoint accuracy: calling myself 'Pooslice'.

'Pooslice' was the name that accessed the game's cheats, and as such could garner my young self enough firepower to bring down countless buildings on each level. The sheer concept of level terrain that could be destroyed and the explosions and tumbling buildings that went with it – often filling up your entire screen – filled me with joy not known before or since.

I'd spend hours gathering the local populace around a skyscraper with the aid of my persuadatron, dumping my explosives and running off giggling. Again and again. Thank you Pooslice, wherever you may be.



Let's kill buildings.

## DEVELOPER'S COMMENTARY

# SINS OF A SOLAR EMPIRE

**W**ITH ITS RECENT European shelf release, the previously online and American store-bound *Sins of a Solar Empire* is set to once again unsettle the sleeping patterns of many RTS fans. At a glance, this is a game that appeared to have come from nowhere from a team

of unknowns, but closer scrutiny reveals the people behind *Sins* show themselves to be none other than a grinning conglomerate of ex-Rockstar developers and roving, but extremely talented, vagabonds.

A game of exploration, expansion, exploitation and extermination, set

*Steve Hogarty* strikes up a diplomatic agreement with Craig Fraser to get an insight into the shock RTS hit of 2008

across a galaxy of immense scale, *Sins of a Solar Empire* pits three races against one another in a desperate bid to occupy every inch of everything. Yeah, it's typical strategy stuff, but the scope and depth of *Sins* make it alluring enough to prompt some investigation. Here goes...



**01 ANONYMITY:** "We're a new company with a new property in a new genre, and in the games industry this is usually considered a strike out. So we were very fortunate to get the attention we did from publishers, and most importantly Stardock. Although Ironclad is very young, our team did have a lot of previous experience - half of our original team are from Rockstar Vancouver, which was previously Barking Dog studios. So some of our developers have worked on *Homeworld: Cataclysm*, Disney's *Treasure Planet: Battle at Procyon*, and *Bully*.

"I would definitely categorise *Sins* as a sleeper hit. Fortunately we had marketing and financial experience as well, so I think some of our decisions were more calculated than you might expect for a start-up developer."

**02 STARDOCK:** "We originally saw Stardock as a competitor, as they were working on *Galactic Civilisations* and our game had some features that were leaning towards that sort of RTS game. Brian Claire at Stardock convinced us our games would be complementary and that we could corner that part of the space strategy market - and he was right. And after we met them, their anti-DRM stance appealed to us. They have a great track record with the community, great customer service and when I went to see them they seemed genuinely passionate about the game. It's really good that we got a lot of creative flexibility - we didn't feel stifled in that sense. I think we'll beat our own sales expectations too. We had a huge party when we hit number one in the US, we had *Rock Band* going in the studio and real instruments downstairs - yeah, we had a big party."

**"Some of our decisions were more calculated than you might expect from a start-up developer"**

03

**ANTI-DRM:** "We think all of the current DRM methods obstruct the rights of paying customers. When we say we're anti-DRM some interpret this to mean that piracy doesn't bother us, which really isn't the case. What we should be saying is that we're pro-customer – doing all we can to reward those who pay. Our stance has resonated very well with gamers, who feel betrayed by the industry. There were many self-confessed pirates who bought our game simply to support our policy – even those who had no initial interest in *Sins*. The Stardock and Ironclad team has become somewhat of a poster boy for gamer rights. I'm not going to complain about that."

"We also strove to keep *Sins* playable on a wide range of hardware. There was a heavy backlash from frustrated gamers in 2007 – many people made it clear that they would not upgrade to a 'god box' simply to enjoy a few games with unreasonably high requirements. Our goal was to build a healthy community of gamers, not an elitist club."



04

**MICRO-MANAGEMENT:** "The first thing we wanted was to have massive scale, we wanted to have far more units on screen than your typical RTS. The next biggest thing was we wanted to have less micro-intensive gameplay, we really wanted to put the strategy back into the genre and stay away from twitch obsessed gameplay. We had a vision of being able to play as both the Emperor and the Commander. Typically in a game of this scale you have some kind of separate map mode where you plan your higher level strategic decisions and the game can be paused while you plan it out, while the combat happens in real time, but we found that by doing that we lost the seamless transition between the two though. The main thing we wanted to follow was our vision of having large empires and epic space battles."



# LOOKING BACK COMMENTARY

05

**SINGLE-PLAYER CAMPAIGN:** "The standard for 4X [explore, expand, exploit, and exterminate] strategy games, like the *Total War* series, is a non-linear sandbox style setup. At the same time, the tradition for RTS games is to have a full campaign. So we were caught in the middle. At one point in development we talked about it a lot, but we eventually turned it down because of our limited resources. We felt it was more important to focus on strong gameplay, a solid engine and great replay value."

"We still have archives of the stories of the origins of the TEC, Advent and Vasari, and we really want to get that out at some point. Quite a bit of work was put into creating the backstory. I mean, it's sad not to see it all in there, but we did try to squeeze some in with the opening cinematic. We got the look and feel of the races through their abilities, the research topics and all that, but it wasn't as much as we wanted to get out there."



06

**SCRAPPED IDEAS:** "There are far too many to list here, but I can share a large one – creating a realistic solar system. We initially modelled the galaxy generator, the art and many of the game mechanics on real solar system attributes. Rare planets, elliptical orbits, real gravity, black skyboxes, moons, accurate planet sizes, accurate inter-stellar distances and so on. A lot of the code to support these systems is still in the game."

"The reason these features were taken out is actually pretty simple. *Sins* is a game, not a simulation. As much as we wanted these elements, they just weren't any fun. Extra-large planets meant excessively long travel times to get around a planet and textures that are just too large for most people's computers. Black skyboxes made it much too difficult to see. Dynamic orbits became ridiculously disorientating, and so on. In the end the fun factor trumps all."



**"The most compelling reason for including the pirates was the ability to backstab your allies"**



**07 RELIGION AND LASERS:** "Discussion of a religion model did come up when we were exploring allegiance and culture. The current implementation of culture was chosen because it was the most universal influence model that fit with the lore for each race. The TEC are an atheist society dominated by consumerism, while the Vasari expand their influence through propaganda and suppression. Really only the Advent could be thought of as spreading influence in a spiritual sense with their temples and unity indoctrination.

"As for our lasers, most of the effects were made by using stock sounds as a base and twisting and bending them into shape by using effects, then layering them to produce something that sounds appropriate. The alien voices were simply performed by talented voice actors – they have had less trickery given to them than the human-sounding voices."



**08 PIRATES:** "We felt the gameplay would be more interesting if there was a common threat to all players, and the space pirate raid fit perfectly. We were able to create tension throughout the game by placing the threat on a timer and allowing players to bid against one another, to see who'd get attacked. This pirate threat increases through the game as players earn more credits to spend on the bids. The pirate model performs as a balancing tool as well, as players typically bid against the strongest opponent. It also serves as a combat aid for players who wanted to focus on an economic game. Above all, the most compelling reason for including the pirates was the ability to backstab your allies! The pirate system was inspired by the invading pirates from the *Settlers of Catan: Cities* board game."



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## REVIEWED!



### ALONE IN THE DARK (DEFINITELY)

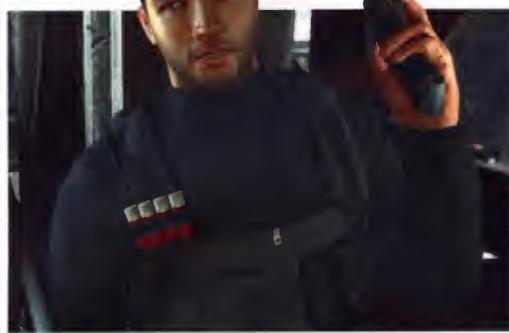
The Central Park terror simulator is here at last! Can Carnby still cut it?

## PLUS!

We play STALKER: Clear Sky, Battlefield: Heroes and more of Far Cry 2. And there may (or may not) be some cool news about a classic shooter series, a series so massive that we can't even hint at what it might be.

# NEXT MONTH! FALLOUT 3

Prepare to walk the wastes. The first hands-on with Bethesda's reinvention of the post-nuclear roleplayer



### ALPHA PROTOCOL

Obsidian explains why we like spies, and why spies like us.



### BIG IN DEUTSCHLAND

Log is forced to visit a German roleplay convention for your amusement!



### FOOTBALL MANAGER: LIVE

How long will Sports Interactive's online effort keep you up past bedtime?



Press release

# BOULDER DASH IV:

THE LEGEND OF THE DIAMOND SKULL-SHAPED ALIEN BOULDERS THAT ARE ACTUALLY FROM SPACE

A LARGE RANCH NEAR SAN FRANCISCO - 23 May, 2008

Today Shattered Hopes Inc., formerly one of the world's foremost videogame developers, announced the revival of their greatest boulder-dodging franchise: Boulder Dash.

"We will be recreating Boulder Dash in its truest sense," claimed bearded CEO JamJar Youngling. "This is a true reinvention that certainly isn't going to piss on anyone's dreams."

"There won't be any unnecessary effects, the boulders won't be enhanced by modern computer technology and all the stunts will be performed, where possible, by Rockford himself."

"This is a true, simple and honest 2D Boulder Dash adventure. We've been away a while – but I assure you it's going to be worth the wait!"

While the storyline will continue to be heavily under wraps, the action takes place 20 years after Boulder Dash III so previous villains Fireflies and Butterflies have excitingly been replaced by Moths and Stick Insects – all of whom join Rockford for an uproarious chase through a network of 2D mines in the pursuit of magical diamond skull-shaped alien boulders. Even though, when you actually play it, you'll discover that it isn't in 2D at all – like you were promised – and is in fact a series of levels with flashy-whizz-around graphics with boulder puzzles in the shape of giant winking gophers continuously falling down waterfalls, in space.

Returning to the fray will be Rockford, now 84, whose life as a monster-crushing diamond hunter hasn't been rendered in computer game form in over 20 years.

"It's an absolute pleasure to have been given a lot of money to make jokes about my age while my idiot son is chased through the trees by computer-generated monkeys," claimed the octogenarian star while dusting himself down from a scene in which he was saved from a nuclear explosion by a lead-lined FUCKING fridge.

#### About the Shattered Hopes Inc.

Since their first, highly successful, series of science-fiction and adventure games Shattered Hopes Inc. have been shredding each one and putting them back together in a random order with flashy graphics to fill in the gaps. They have pissed on each and every one of our childhoods. Even though Howard the Duck Tetris was better than most people say.

For more information on Shattered Hopes Inc. visit [www.lucasfilm.com](http://www.lucasfilm.com)



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